

## DOCTORAL THESIS

### **Transmission of Anlo-Ewe Dances in Ghana and in Britain: Investigating, Reconstructing and Disseminating Knowledge Embodied in the Music and Dance Traditions of Anlo-Ewe People in Ghana**

Kwashie Kuwor, Sylvanus

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Transmission of Anlo-Ewe Dances in Ghana and in  
Britain: Investigating, Reconstructing and Disseminating  
Knowledge Embodied in the Music and Dance Traditions  
of Anlo-Ewe People in Ghana.

By

Sylvanus Kwashie Kuwor [Dip. Dance Studies-University of Ghana,  
MA-Brunel, Dip. Ethnochoreology-NTNU, Trondheim]

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Department of Dance Studies  
University of Roehampton  
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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my ancestors, **Dotsey Akor Kuwor** and **Atsufui Godogah** whose ancestral spirits and prowess continue to illuminate my mind in the area of Anlo-Ewe music, dance and cultural knowledge.

## **ABSTRACT**

Among the Anlo-Ewe of Ghana, dance functions essentially as a pivot around which indigenous cultural practices revolve. Anlo-Ewe music and dance tradition which is the focus of this study, serves as a dynamic tool in the transmission of indigenous knowledge, skills, values and virtues. In addition to being a repository of Anlo-Ewe knowledge dance provides the avenue through which dancers, musicians, story tellers and visual artists are able to document, preserve and transmit indigenous knowledge and reenact the historical, socio-cultural and political structure of the Anlo-Ewe. Twenty-first century global cultural transformation in the midst of constant human migration continues to influence Anlo-Ewe cultural forms. Commodification of dance has affected the educational and cultural function of Anlo-Ewe dance and its related arts and continues to reduce them to mere entertainment activities. Due to these challenges, some Anlo-Ewe youths in Ghana and in Britain are gradually being separated from their cultural heritage and therefore, losing cultural identity.

In view of the above, this study responds to the need to examine the elements and functions of Anlo-Ewe dance in the transmission of indigenous knowledge and values to serve as a source of information to help policy makers to create and promote the awareness of the use of Anlo-Ewe knowledge and values among Anlo-Ewe youths and scholars in Ghana, Britain and the diaspora. It investigates the indigenous knowledge and values embedded in Anlo-Ewe dance and the extent to which these cultural forms can be harnessed in building contemporary society in both the indigenous and the international settings.

Therefore, this thesis focuses on the dance tradition of the Anlo-Ewe people in Ghana, its emergence in Britain as an art form in cross-cultural education as well as its dynamics or processes of change within the indigenous and international settings. It uses fieldwork including

auto-ethnography and focuses on my own practice and the 21 years of operations by the British funded 'Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble' (1984-2005), a Ghanaian group that brought Anlo-Ewe dances to Britain.

Through the lenses of key concepts including heritage, aesthetics, identity, nationalism and representation, I explore the fundamental elements of Anlo-Ewe dance, its use and significance as well as how it can be harnessed to serve the needs of contemporary multicultural society.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Dance, according to Sondra Fraleigh (1999) "derives from human movement and consciousness" (1999, 3). As a movement system or a complex cultural phenomenon, dance concerns individuals and society. With such characteristics as providing means of recreation and empowerment, support and protest, cultural display, provocation, pleasure and entertainment, creativity and aesthetic values, dance and its related art forms have the potential to activate and transform people's lives. In addition to this transformation, dance can also document the shared traditions of a people. Thus dance may become a documented history and also a distinctive cultural form that defines a particular society or nation.

This study discusses dance in its socio-cultural contexts with emphasis on movement, music, poetry, storytelling, social and political structure of the Anlo-Ewe people in Ghana. It conceptualises the various roles and functions of Anlo-Ewe dance forms in the performance of both 'traditional' and 'contemporary' African arts in Ghana and in Britain, situating them in a global context under the broader term 'African dance.'

As a dancer, musician and general practitioner of traditional African dance forms, my experience in both Ghana and Britain gives me a somewhat privileged entry into the broad subject area. This experience (of practising and teaching Anlo-Ewe dance) has given me insight into the Anlo-Ewe culture. In this thesis, I view the transmission of these dances in Ghana as a process of transferring cultural knowledge and values from one generation to the next, while I consider the transmission in Britain as an intercultural process capable of transforming the Black British community generally, and especially the Ghanaian/Ewe-British community through cultural

reunion. Furthermore, I argue that the dance can act as a cultural bridge between different groups making up a culturally diverse society. By comparing the use of Anlo-Ewe dance in two different environments, Ghana and Britain, this ethnographic study demonstrates how dance brings cultural reunion to African immigrant/diaspora communities.

The study contributes to the question of how traditional Ghanaian dance, after many years of conscious efforts to develop it, following attainment of independence from British colonisation, can now be used in Ghana to reinforce traditional knowledge. It also creates the awareness about the importance of harnessing Ghanaian dance in British society, as an art form in cultural education and also as an expression of cultural freedom, empowerment, transformation, healing and awareness to the Black and African/Ghanaian community in Britain.

### **1.1. Background to the Study**

Starting with a historical perspective, this project investigates the transmission of Anlo-Ewe dance forms in Ghana (both the rural and the urban settings) and how these dance forms travelled from Ghana to Britain in 1974 through a performance group known as *Sankofa* (a Ghanaian/*Akan* word meaning, return to your roots)<sup>1</sup>. As one of the many Adinkra symbols<sup>2</sup> of the Akan in Ghana, *Sankofa* rejuvenates in Ghanaians the desire to return to their culture in order to reunite with the values that define them as a people. Adopting the principles of *Sankofa*, I will now return to my roots to find the origin of the Anlo-Ewe and their dances.

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<sup>1</sup>*Akan* is the most popular language in Ghana. Its native speakers are called Akans. In Chapter 6, I will be discussing the different layers and regions that constitute the nation Ghana.

<sup>2</sup> Visual symbols originally created by the Ashanti/Akan of Ghana that represent Ghanaian traditional concepts and are used extensively in fabrics, pottery and advertising logos.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 1: Map of Anlo-Eweland. Source: (Verdon, 1983, 316).

As shown in the shaded portion of figure 1 above, the Ewes, in general, are found in the Volta Region of Ghana and some parts of Togo, Benin and Nigeria. Historians John Kuada and Yao Chacha (1999) write,

The Ewe live in the area south-east of the Volta Lake. Some groups of the tribe also occupy the southern half of the Republics of Togo and Benin. When the Yoruba Empire began to expand, there was a serious shortage of land. This forced the Ewe to migrate, around the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in search of a new home (1999, 14).

Although the Ewe migrated from Yorubaland in Nigeria almost 6 centuries ago, they still possess a few Yoruba cultural elements some of which are exhibited in their dance forms. A good

example is the main movement in *Gahu* dance, which was taken from the Yoruba tradition in Ile Ife. Although the Ewes still exhibit Yoruba elements in *Gahu* dance today, this is very minimal as the usual contraction and release of the torso in Ewe tradition has become dominant in the dance.

This research focuses on the music and dance culture of a section of the Ewe known as the Anlo-Ewe. The Anlo-Ewe people reside in the south-eastern corner of the Republic of Ghana. While many Ewe story tellers and tradition keepers often trace the origin of the Anlo-Ewe to Nortsie, their last settlement prior to migrating to Ghana, other historians find it necessary to go beyond the Nortsie years to capture their life experiences in Ile Ife (Nigeria) and Ketu. Francis Agbodeka (1997) for example, traces the origin of the Anlo-Ewe to Yorubaland in Nigeria and discovers the numerous challenges they faced in their struggle for survival. He writes:

The Ewes of southeastern Ghana went through varied experiences and circumstances. Their long westward move from walled towns of Ketu and Nortsie and often along the coastal palm belt resulted in the acquisition of skills for different architectural types. They included permanent reinforced swish houses modelled on Yoruba structures-temporary-hurriedly-built structures of coconut palm, *agor* beams or bamboos for the numerous short emergency stops on the long westward march (Agbodeka, 1997, 5).

Agbodeka's version of this narrative is one of the multiple perspectives gathered for this study and I provide some of these contrasts in an ethnographic discussion of the Anlo-Ewe in chapter two which includes a detailed map of Anlo-Eweland.

## 1.2. Statement of the Problem

Many of the historical discoveries of the Anlo-Ewe people still remain in oral tradition. Anthropologist Katherine Lin Guerts observes, “Anlo and Ewe people lived in oral societies for centuries before the Ewe language was transliterated, and storytelling as well as other verbal arts have a robust history and continue as vital forms of cultural production across West Africa” (Guerts, 2002, 129). Guerts’ study is one of the few scholarly works on the Anlo-Ewe that sought to transform Ewe indigenous knowledge from oral tradition into a documented written history. In an interview I conducted, the Ewe scholar Dartey Kumodzie endorsed the above view and linked the origin of oral documentation of the Ewe to the era after the fall of the Ancient Ghana Empire<sup>3</sup> in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Kumodzie explained that,

The Ewes were among the multitude of African people who witnessed the great fall of the ancient Ghana Empire in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It was very crucial for them to store all their experiences for their younger generations. In the absence of Western documentation in those ancient times, they were compelled to store their experiences also known as their significant knowledge in dance, which includes movements, gestures, songs, stories, re-enactments/festivals, rituals, religious and political ceremonies, philosophical concepts, and names (Kumodzie, 2011).

Kumodzie’s view supports the notion held by many Ewe scholars including dance scholar, Modesto Amegago (2000) that dance, therefore, became the repository of knowledge upon which African educational institutions were established with custodians being the teachers who passed oral tradition from one generation to the next. In my own experience as a child growing up in Ewe community in Ghana, this oral tradition became an integral part of my training and education in Anlo-Ewe indigenous knowledge. Dancer and scholar Zelma Badu-Young (2002) has observed that “Although dance plays an important role in everyday life of the Ewe people,

---

<sup>3</sup> The Ghana Empire (also known as Wagadugu) covered what are now Mauritania, Southeast Mali and Northern Senegal, all in West Africa. It was about 500 miles northwest of today’s modern Ghana.

little has been written about it" (2002, 8). Badu-Young's observation reveals a problem that may be attributed to the general acceptance of oral tradition as the main system of cultural education, not only in Anlo-Eweland but also in many other African societies.

Music and dance scholar Doris Green acknowledges the importance of this system of education in her article, 'Resurrecting African Music and Dance' (1998). She writes: "When keepers of African oral tradition die, they literally take libraries of African Music and Dance into the grave where it is entombed and lost to the world forever" (Green 1998, 54). However, this unique cultural structure was never free from external influence. This was especially true during British colonisation (1860-1957) under which many Ghanaians were led to rebel against their own cultural heritage, in an act of reverse ethnocentrism where the imported more powerful socio-cultural system was seen as better than the indigenous one.

This study could have assumed a single mode of focusing solely on Anlo-Ewe dances in Ghana without necessarily extending its scope to Britain. It could have also adopted a relatively comfortable endeavour of researching Anlo-Ewe dances solely in Britain, perhaps, using Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble (a British funded company that operated in Britain for 21 years, 1984-2005) as the main focus. The design of this research in a framework of dualistic nature was necessitated by the following factors: (i) The relationship between Ghana and Britain (both past and present); (ii) My personal involvement in the transmission of dance in Ghana; (iii) My role in the transmission process in Britain; and (iv) The search for an appropriate framework within which African dance forms could be analysed or/and represented.

### **1.3. The Relationship between Ghana and Britain.**

Ghana and Britain have had a very long relationship that travelled on many roads with the significant difference being that the former was colonised and exploited by the latter. The colonisers imposed their European way of life on the colonised, making Ghana adopt British structures today in their various educational, legal and professional systems. The period between 1860 and 1957 in Ghana, then known as the Gold Coast<sup>4</sup>, saw the British in total control of this West African territory. The colonial administration did not only oversee the political and economic affairs of the colonised but also they had significant impact on the religion and culture of the people. The colonial era, according to 20<sup>th</sup> century writings, was characterised by negative attitudes towards the traditional music and dance practised in Ghana. Scholars of African music, dance and culture have commented on these attitudes and practices (Agawu 1995; Bebey 1975; Nketia 1974). These scholars agree that traditional values embodied in African religious beliefs have been lost because the missionaries and the colonial institutions failed to acknowledge such customs. The colonisers regarded Ghanaian and African arts, in which one finds the most dynamic expressions of the African way of life, as acts of paganism, barbarism and heathenism. While this negative perception and portrayal of African dances and cultures may be seen as partially contributory to the disappearance of many dance forms from Anlo-Ewe communities in Ghana today, this research also examines other factors including the impact of political interference on the various art and cultural institutions in post-independence Ghana.

The relationship between the two countries today provides a solid basis for the pursuance of shared commitments to the eradication of poverty, strengthening of democracy, good governance

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<sup>4</sup> Colonial name of Ghana- derives from its natural endowment of gold. This had been its name until independence on 6<sup>th</sup> March, 1957 when Nkrumah announced Ghana as the new name.

and the rule of law, towards promoting the continued growth of prosperous and equitable trade relations.

#### **1.4. My Role in the Transmission Process (Ghana)**

The post colonial era saw Ghana's first president, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah propose the concept of cultural emancipation which gave birth to the Ghana Dance Ensemble through folklorisation<sup>5</sup> in 1962. The operations of the Ghana Dance Ensemble promoted dance as part of the cultural heritage of Ghana leading to the phenomenon of many dance groups in the country being established. However, with the exception of notable modern scholars including William Adinku (1994), Modesto Amegago (2011), Kofi Gbolonyo (2009), Zelma Badu-Young (2002) and Paschal Young (2011), there is very little literature about these modern developments of dance in Ghana and the lack of documentation may be blamed for the current under-development of dance as a profession and as an academic discipline. I explore these issues in chapter six linking them to the concept of nationalism during Nkrumah's political term of office from 1957 to 1966.

My role in dance transmission in Ghana stemmed from my childhood practice of participating in drumming and dancing activities both as a shared tradition of the community and as a performer at inter-schools festivals and competitions from the 1970s onwards. This progressed through a life time training as a dance practitioner, teacher and cultural officer with Ghanaian arts and educational institutions in many communities and schools both in Anlo-Eweland and in the city of Accra. Reflecting on my practice in Ghana reveals that despite Nkrumah's firm foundation,

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<sup>5</sup> A term used by Anthony Shay (2002) among others to refer to the collection of local dance cultures into a creation of national culture, presented largely in theatrical settings.



the lukewarm attitude of Ghanaian youths towards their indigenous music and dance in the twenty-first century is striking. In the case of the Anlo-Ewe, the main attraction of the youth in forming *wuhawo* (dance clubs<sup>6</sup>) in the postcolonial era has been thrown away with the youths now embracing music and dance of the Western world, a phenomenon that is gradually separating this Ghanaian group from the values that define them as a people.

When I started studying dance as an academic discipline at the University of Ghana in Accra in the 1990s, I began questioning the above phenomenon. Secondly, my role as a cultural officer in charge of music and dance with the Arts Council of Ghana (now the National Commission on Culture) from 2002-2005 provided the opportunity of not only observing and documenting people's rebellious attitudes towards their own culture, but also meeting and brainstorming with cultural officers, policy makers and traditional authorities such as chiefs and community leaders towards finding a lasting solution to the problem.

What I have discovered from the aforementioned experiences over the years points to lack of education which contributes greatly to the youth not knowing that their knowledge foundation can be found in their music and dance. I view education as a concept that may be understood as the art of cultivating the moral, emotional, physical, psychological, spiritual and cultural dimensions of developing an individual. Agbodeka (1997) explains that the traditional education that dominated the pre-colonial era of Ghana/Anlo-Eweland is still relevant and must be merged together with the current clerical mode, arguing that "traditional education gave the child knowledge of religious rites, urged him to observe customs and traditions and cultivate proper

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<sup>6</sup> *Wuhawo* also known as *Wuhaborborwo* (dance clubs) is the indigenous term that describes social networking among the Anlo-Ewe. The core of socio-cultural activities within these clubs is centred on dance which includes song, percussion instruments, prescribed costumes and gesticulation. See Avorgbedor (2001, 261).

attitudes and behaviour patterns" (1997, 3). Agbodeka's standpoint agrees with a body of literature in science, philosophy and cultural history such as Kathleen Primos (1996), and John Diamond (2001) which provided an overarching concept to describe this way of understanding education as a perspective known as holism. A holistic way of thinking as discussed by scholars including John Miller (1999), Schriener et al (2005), Semetsky (2012), Jiddu Krishmurti (1990) and Rudge (2010), seeks to encompass and integrate multiple layers of meaning and experience rather than defining human possibilities narrowly. Kumodzie explains, "The educational curriculum for the youth must be strictly based on the knowledge system of the people. Every educational review must be done on the bases of this knowledge system" (Kumodzie 2009, 11). Kumodzie believes education in Ghana generally and in Anlo-Eweland particularly must be based on indigenous knowledge which can be found in music and dance.

### **1.5. My Role in the Transmission Process in Britain**

As a dancer, musician and choreographer born and raised in an Ewe community, my work in Britain over the past eight years has received significant recognition from many schools and colleges. This success is in part due to the fact that Ghanaian dance groups, such as *Sankofa*, *Agudze*, *Adzido*, and others operated in Britain for more than twenty years. These earlier groups will always be remembered for being cultural ambassadors who first introduced Ghanaian dances in Britain. Sadly, they could not fully achieve their aim of promoting the positive values of Ghanaian dances before their operations suddenly came to a close often as a result of a cut in Arts Funding. Discussing the 21 years operation of the company and the impact on its operational environment, I raise some questions about Adzido as a company and its structures. In view of the fact that Adzido appeared to have kept its common archive in oral tradition with

company members now becoming documents of its existence, I also open a debate on some issues about its funding and lack of documentation, all of which I discuss in chapter seven.

The search for a specialist to continue the work of Adzido and other collapsed groups in the area of cultural education finally brought me to Britain after decades of experience in Ghana as a dance practitioner and cultural officer. My first five years of practice as a dance artist in Britain had reached about two hundred schools with the focus on basically delivering workshops in Ghanaian/African dance, drumming and storytelling. Relocating my practice from Ghana to Britain presented an entirely new experience through which I learnt so much and eventually integrated myself into British society. In the new experience, I realised that the dances I practised in Ghana could no longer maintain their 'originality' in Britain in terms of movement style, intensity, space and rhythm. This became the beginning of my re-creation process out of which a model called *Hesu* (creative energy) has been developed and used in teaching Anlo-Ewe dance technique in particular and Ghanaian/African dance technique in general. In chapter eight, I discuss this technique and compare it with other dance movements that are visible in the school environments I operated in Britain.

Two years after my re-creation process which was considered as relevant to the British school curriculum, I decided to pursue a postgraduate course in order to gain knowledge and skills that would enable me to write about dance and its deep-rooted knowledge. This ambition took me to Brunel University in West London where I studied and obtained a Master of Arts Degree in Creative and Professional Writing with a graduating dissertation titled, Dances in Anlo-Eweland (2008).

## **1.6. The Search for an Appropriate Framework**

The positive response to my practice in Britain challenges the thoughts of earlier scholars who perceived colonialism as a major contributing factor to the controversy surrounding representation of the African cultural heritage by foreign observers. Scholars across the African continent such as South Africa's Hugh Tracy (1961), Ghana's Kwabena Nketia (1974), and Uganda's James Makubuya (1995) have expressed their reservations about representation of African cultures by people who did not understand the African people and the function of the arts in the lives of Africans. While I partially subscribe to these reservations, I hold the view that by constructing an African framework one can provide an appropriate means through which non Africans can contribute significantly to the development and critique of African dance and its related arts. I also recognise that one of the challenges involved in this endeavour is the frequent generalisations such as the notion of African dance without qualification as though it were a single genre. It is important to stress at this juncture that, reducing the many genres to the generic 'African' does not in any way do justice to the creativity and styles of specific groups and individuals (Grau, 1993). I offer my perspective on these issues in chapter nine. In addition to the aforementioned factors, questions arising from my practice as a teacher of African/Ghanaian dance forms in Britain point to the fact that it is very necessary to reinvestigate the power of oral tradition and its role in the preservation and development of Anlo-Ewe culture and the dance in the face of overwhelming odds.

Therefore, the study reported in this thesis the exploration of dance tradition of the Anlo-Ewe people in Ghana, its emergence in Britain as an art form in cross-cultural education as well as its dynamics or processes of change within the indigenous and international settings. It examines the

interrelation among the African dances focusing on the Anlo-Ewe dance vocabulary in situating it in broader dance contexts.

### **1.7. Aims and Scope of the Study**

This work investigates the use of dance in passing on knowledge and values among the Anlo-Ewe, as well as its use in Britain as a cross-cultural art form in education. The study involves an investigation of the origin of Anlo-Ewe dances within their indigenous setting and in Britain, using my own practice in order to reconstruct these dances in theory and practice, emphasising the emic perspective or using culturally specific analytical methods as well as etic or relevant cross cultural approaches to dance/music analytical approaches; and to disseminate these significant cultural values and knowledge.

It also re-creates or re-arranges the Anlo-Ewe dances for the purpose of reviving and preserving them for onward transmission to succeeding generations. This is very necessary given the fact that the significant knowledge required in developing Anlo-Eweland is heavily embedded in dance. The work offers critical analysis of the emergence and impact of such dances in Britain, with a focus on the performances by Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble that had existed in Britain for twenty-one years (1984-2005) as well as my own practice in Britain as an African traditional dance educator in order to expand and document the works of the previous artists and dance companies in Britain for the benefit of fellow researchers, scholars, artists and future generations of Anlo-Ewes and Ghanaians in the diaspora as well as all people living in Britain. Additionally, this project uses Anlo-Ewe dance to develop African dance movement vocabulary and techniques through dance workshops in schools, compares and contrasts the usages and

functions of these movements with movements of other dance forms in Britain for the purpose of inter-cultural arts education.

The aforementioned aims in addition to the four main factors discussed under the problem statement constitute the central interest of this study in two ways. (i) How dance among the Anlo-Ewe is utilised as an instrument for the transmission of social and community values and the significance it has to its participants? (ii) How can some of these social and community values embedded in Anlo-Ewe dance be harnessed in Britain and used in cultural education? These central points build on a notion that, dance has values that must be articulated; and this leads to the following key research questions:

How can one recreate Anlo-Ewe cultural knowledge in the era of constant human migration in the midst of cultural influences and interactions between the various cultural knowledge systems? How can this knowledge be sustained in this contemporary era? Why should British society bother about this knowledge system? What is the function of Anlo-Ewe dance in the indigenous setting? What is its role in Britain and in the diaspora? Which theoretical framework is best for this kind of research?

The study explores these questions through the lenses of key rudiments including heritage, aesthetics, identity, nationalism and representation. I look at dance and its related art forms as a cultural heritage of the Anlo-Ewe, examining how dance identifies a person as belonging to Anlo-Ewe culture, how it occasionally becomes a political tool in constructing national identity or national culture and more generally, how it becomes a representation of people's cultural knowledge and values.

## **1.8. Methodology**

The research methodology uses qualitative modes of inquiry which include: (1) fieldwork for primary data collection, (2) library and archival research for secondary data collection; and (3) data analysis, and interpretation.

As a member of Anlo-Ewe culture and dance community with a significant role in dance transmission in both field locations, I use auto-ethnography as an investigative tool with a portion of the data drawing on my personal diaries and feedbacks from my own practice as a dancer/dance teacher, musician, choreographer and general practitioner of the African arts. The method further involves interdisciplinary (historical, political, sociological, cultural, musical anthropological) participatory and observatory field research.

### **1.8.1. Field Work**

In view of the fact that material for this study still remains in oral tradition, field work constitutes a bulk of this research. Intensive ethnographic research was conducted in two different locations namely; Ghana and Britain.

### **1.8.2. Field Work in Ghana:**

The fieldwork in Ghana is focused on two separate environments: 1. Anlo-Eweland in the Volta Region of Ghana made up of 36 different communities with Anloga being the traditional capital. 2. University of Ghana, Legon in Accra simply referred to as the urban/academic setting.

Although formal field research for this study was conducted intermittently between April 2010 and September 2012, it extends my ongoing investigation into African music and dance, which began in my infancy through my participation in, and observation of Anlo-Ewe music and dance in the social, religious, ceremonial, economic, and political contexts.

I have carried out primary data collection in Anlo communities including Anloga, Tegbui, Woe, Dornorgbor, Agorve, Avume, Keta, Afife, Anyako, Bedzame, Atiehipe, Genui, Whuti, Srongboe and Anyanui. In these communities my study employed observation, demonstration and participation in some traditional Anlo-Ewe music and dance forms, such as *agbadza*, *dunekpoe*, *ageshe*, *agbekor*, *adzogbo*, *gadzo*, *nyayito*, *gota*, *gakpa*, *afawu*, *korkuwu*, *atrikpui*, *zizihawo*, *misego* and *akpoka*. I have documented some of these performances in the local areas on social, ceremonial, and festive occasions with audio-visual devices.

I also interviewed traditional artists, parents, and some university dance students and performers, instructors, some members of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, and affiliates of the School of Performing Arts, the Institute of African Studies, and the International Centre for African Music and Dance. My interviews were both formal and informal depending on the preference of the participant and involved an investigation of Anlo-Ewe dances, their transmission in the indigenous environment and the academic setting. In the academic setting students were interviewed on their understanding of the term 'African dance' and also on Anlo-Ewe dance forms that are taught at the University of Ghana and their perspectives on the prevailing literature of such music and dance forms.



I have interacted with renowned Anlo-Ewe musicians, composers and master drummers who may be classified as great masters of Ewe music and dance. They include; Nelson Denoo, Kwadzo Nukunu, Kwaku Agorni Gatefe, Johnson Keme, Seth Gati, Godwin Gati and Dumega Xorve Dunya. The great masters offered their vast knowledge and experience regarding the historical developments of Ewe music and dance. I also interviewed master musicians, dancers, and senior members of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, such as Christopher Ametefe, Abdalla Zablong and William Diku about the current repertoire of the company particularly with a focus on Anlo-Ewe choreographic pieces. I also interacted with Anlo-Ewe music and dance scholars including Modesto Amegago, Nisio Fiagbedzi, Kofi Gbolonyo, Elikem Nyamuame and Dartey Kumodzie on the knowledge and values embedded in Anlo-Ewe music and dance.

I collected data from the Archive of the School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana and this was supplemented through participation in and observation of music and dance classes and performances. I gathered information at Ho during the Ghanaian Second Cycle Schools' National Music, Dance and Cultural Festival (5<sup>th</sup>-10th September, 2011). Renowned professors such as J. H. K. Nketia, Francis Nii Yartey, Seth Asare Newman and Nii Kwei Sowah were interviewed on issues regarding the teaching of Anlo-Ewe dances in the university curriculum.

### **1.8.3. Fieldwork in Britain**

In Britain, I have carried out practical Anlo-Ewe music and dance workshops in primary schools, secondary schools, colleges and universities in England, mainly London and other cities including Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Derby, Leeds, York, Newcastle and Nottingham. Although these workshops have reached more than 200 schools and institutions including some

community groups and faith based organisations, this research focuses on work in a few schools between January, 2009 and December, 2012. The dance workshops in schools engaged the participants in learning about and doing Anlo-Ewe dances and other Ghanaian dance forms under the broader term 'African dance'. I have also worked with Noviha UK<sup>7</sup>, the only Anlo-Ewe Association in Britain as a master drummer and choreographer. During their Hogbetsotso<sup>8</sup> cultural festivals of 2007, 2009 and 2012, I was given the opportunity to document the dance performance segment of these celebrations, an opportunity I utilised by focusing on Anlo-Ewe music and dance performed by members of Anlo-Ewe culture and their British born children. This experience contributes greatly to my understanding of diasporic relations and other sensitive issues involved. I also attended programmes and training workshops organised by the Association of Dance of the African Diaspora (ADAD), a national organisation that supports the practice and appreciation of dance of the African Diaspora.

This study also conducted archival research at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) Library and other British libraries, on the Internet, and at African music and dance performances and conferences in Britain. I also worked, interacted and performed with London based Ghanaian/African dance companies and organisations including Abladei UK, Afiba Arts, Venavi Drums and Agudze Dance Ensemble. I documented the works of these Ghanaian groups while reflecting on my workshops in schools which are related to Black History Month celebrations, drawing on case studies such as those set out in Theresa Buckland's edited

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<sup>7</sup> A welfare association of the Anlo-Ewe in Britain which was formed in 1981. I discuss this group in chapter eight.

<sup>8</sup> An annual cultural festival of the Anlo-Ewe which documents the history of their migration and settlement. The main attraction of this festival is *misegodance* which documents the escape of the Anlo-Ewes from Notsie. I discuss this dance in Chapter Four.

collection Dance in the Field: Theory, Methods and Issues in Dance Ethnography (1999). I employ this collection to provide a framework to my analysis.

The key questions outlined in this study necessitated a review of relevant literature in three categories. (i) The first segment concerns anthropological, ethnomusicological, ethnological, historical and socio-cultural facet of scholarly works on the Anlo-Ewe in particular and Ghana in general. Among these works I have reviewed Katherine Lin Gurts (2002), Godwin K. Nukunya (1969), Sandra Greene (1996), William O. Adinku (1994), Modesto Amegago (2011) Francis Agbodeka (1997), Nissio Fiagbedzi (2009), James Burns (2009) and Kumassah (2009). These works provide ethnomusicological, anthropological and ethnochoreological overview of the Anlo-Ewe as well as of the whole nation of Ghana. They offer a comprehensive mode of study into the traditional and the contemporary socio-political and economic life of the Anlo-Ewe, including their history, location, occupation, religious practices, and kinship or lineage system, and the effects of contemporary changes on their social, economic, and political systems. They also provide insight into the inter-linkages between history, social processes and individual creative artists, deeper understanding of the theories of curriculum, art education, creativity, creative processes in Ewe music and dance.

(ii) The second segment reviews literature on Black and African dance in Britain, United States of America (USA) and elsewhere in the diaspora. Britain based works include; Paul Gilroy (1993), Christy Adair (2007), Funmi Adewole et al (2007) and Rodriguez King-Dorset (2008). The American focused literature include Brenda Dixon Gottschild (2003), Thomas F DeFrantz

(2002) and Welsh Asante Kariamu (2004) all of which provide varied perspectives on the understanding of Black as a "race", a category and as a dance form through different methodologies, providing empirical evidence of the contributions made by Black dance artists and companies to the development of British culture, USA and elsewhere in the diaspora.

(iii) The third segment of literature relates to the key concepts explored in the research such as aesthetics, nationalism, heritage, identity and representation. Andrée Grau (2003) and Adrienne Kaeppler (2003) provide insight into the concept of aesthetics, Stuart Hall (1997) sets the scene for cultural representation. Hall (1997) examines representation through language as the centre of the process of producing meaning. His work discusses semiotic and discursive approaches to representation. A semiotic approach deals with how language produces meaning (its poetics) whereas the discursive approach deals more with the effects and consequences of representation (its politics). Hall's study explores representation as a signifying practice in a rich diversity of social contexts and institutional sites, including the use of photography in the construction of national identity and culture; the poetics and politics of exhibiting other cultures in ethnographic museums; fantasies of the radicalised other in popular media, film, and image; the construction of masculine identities in discourses of consumer culture and advertising; and the gendering of narratives in television soap operas.

Anthony Shay (2002) discusses the concept of nationalism and identity formation with dance and Kariamu Welsh Asante (1996) provides understanding of African aesthetic elements. These works discuss from different ideological perspectives the representational elements of dance, aesthetic elements in dance as linked to various aspects of life of a people and the notions of nationhood, identity formation and cultural power as linked to dance.

These works provide the level of theorisation and understanding required for investigating my research questions. A literature review alone does not constitute primary scholarship (Cooper, 1988) hence I have employed these secondary sources basically to validate my primary materials. In view of the fact that Anlo-Ewe primary material is largely verbal and still remains in oral tradition, I employ the above literature to provide an empirical, theoretical and analytical framework within which my result is presented in detail. By the nature of my research, I find it appropriate to give in-depth review to the aforementioned literature and incorporate them into the various chapters of their relevance as opposed to devoting a whole chapter to it. In this stratum, the relevant literature is used to set the scene at the beginning of each chapter as a background and also as a justification for my entire inquiry.

## **1.9 Theoretical Framework**

This study looks at dance as a movement system as well as a cultural phenomenon. Therefore, both ethnochoreology and the anthropology of dance provide theoretical platforms for addressing issues and gaps outlined in this research. Adopting this mode of technique provides me the opportunity to immerse myself into Anlo-Ewe culture, not only to live and share the culture with the people, but also to study and record information about their life styles that are closely linked to dance. This framework provides the platform to understand dance, not only as a movement system but also its role in communities that produce and patronise it. As a result, the anthropology of dance may be considered as one of the successful approaches to document the ways in which dance is used to construct and maintain individual and group identities, facilitate

or protest political agendas and rationalise or question cultural imbalances. As a dance practitioner, I am interested in dance not only as a bodily expression but also as a complex cultural phenomenon and a repository of other cultural elements of society.

There is a significant area of Ewe discourse in ethnomusicological scholarship that focuses on the relationship between music, sound, dance and social relations. Examples include A M Jones (1959); Nissio Fiagbedzi (1977); John Miller Chernoff (1979), David Locke (1980) and James Burns (2009). Other Ewe scholarly works including G K Nkunya (1969); Kweku Akyeampong (2001) and Catherine Lin Geurts (2002) focused on history and anthropology drawing on social historical theories and approaches that sought to reconstruct Ewe cultural history from the primary records of ordinary lives/oral traditions.

This research is guided by ethnochoreological and anthropological methodologies and theories as well as relevant historical and sociolinguistic approaches and theoretical considerations. Twentieth century scholarship looked more closely at 'subjectivity' where the field worker, researcher and scholar became the central point in such debates as insider-outsider. This framework adopts a paradigm offered by the 'objectivity' focused research of the twenty-first century scholarship emphasising that, meaningful analysis of the dance of any people unquestionably requires both an appreciation of the culture in which the dance exists and what meaning the dance might have for its practitioners. Whilst all the reflective analytical work is relevant, analysing the empirical data focuses on an emic perspective. Inspiration is drawn from such studies as Modesto Amegago (2011), Andrée Grau (2003), Adrienne Kaeppler (2003, and

2006), Janet Adshead (1981), Kariamu Welsh Asante (1996), Theresa J. Buckland (1999 and 2006) and Anthony Shay (2002) whose works provide evidence of a fundamental and indispensable relationship between dance and other social, intellectual and cultural domains in regard to knowledge, values, styles, practices, underlying dispositions and world views.

This research draws on these theoretical standpoints to discuss the intellectual and aesthetic factors as well as the development and practices of dance. The framework offers a perspective that allows consideration that Anlo-Ewe dance with its related arts and its practices are not just elements of culture but are also repositories of the people's knowledge system, values and history. Other anthropological and philosophical works that strengthen the foundation of this framework include Kwame Anthony Appiah (1992), Kwesi Wiredu (1996), Kwame Gyekye (1997) and V. Y. Mudimbe (1994). These works underscore the existence of African philosophies, systems of thought and the importance of cultural values in the training and education of African youth.

#### **1.10. Data Analysis**

In the process of analysing this data and theorising on the subject, I would like to state that being born and raised within the Anlo-Ewe and Ghanaian traditions and educated in their local and institutional settings has given me an added advantage in gaining much insight into the culture. This is not to imply any absolute understanding of the culture and art forms, but I will endeavour to provide a comprehensive analysis of this data to facilitate effective representation of Anlo-Ewe dance and its role in cross-cultural arts education. I have tried as much as possible to render

other people's narratives from multiple perspectives of Anlo-Ewe tradition keepers, chiefs, elders, dancers, drummers, singers and story tellers as well as my own explanations and descriptions so as not to offer a homogenous singular perspective.

Having been involved in the transmission of Anlo-Ewe dances in both the local and the international settings, I seek to offer an academic perspective on this auto-ethnographic data. I also recognise the fact that reflecting on one's own practice demands the employment of principles of objectivity to govern the process and therefore, in applying academic thought to Anlo-Ewe dance tradition, I adopt a paradigm of writing on insider material from an outsider perspective with a greater awareness that although Anlo-Ewe history dwells in oral tradition, ethnography provides an appropriate avenue through which its written documentation can be done. As observed by dance scholar Theresa J. Buckland (2006), "the aim to document traditional rural culture for posterity relies upon belief in a past that can be systematically and objectively recorded" (Buckland 2006, 10).

### **1.11. Summary of Chapters**

Following this introductory chapter which included a brief history and location of the Anlo-Ewe people, introduced the methodology, theoretical framework and the structure of the whole project, in Chapter 2, I provide ethnochoreological and anthropological exploration into Anlo-Ewe indigenous knowledge. The chapter offers an ethnographic overview of the Anlo-Ewe such as their historical, geographical, political and socio-cultural background and how these are linked to dance.



In Chapter 3, I present an aesthetic discussion of Anlo-Ewe music and dance with the introduction of Anlo-Ewe aesthetic elements. I also discuss the Agbadza dance as a case study to validate the distinction between dances in Africa and non-African forms. Chapter 4 looks at dance as a vital part of Anlo-Ewe traditional media. Here, I explore the dynamic collaboration between music and the dancing body together with visual forms and multisensory modalities as an impressive way of communication among the Anlo-Ewe. In Chapter 5, I examine dance as the regulator of various life aspects of the Anlo-Ewe. I also categorise them into four main groups namely war dances, cult dances, royal dances and social dances.

In Chapter 6, I discuss the development of dance in the postcolonial era of Ghana, focusing on Pan-African ideologies of the first Ghanaian leader, Kwame Nkrumah. Here I discuss the formation of the Ghana Dance Ensemble as a creation of national culture and the teaching of dance as an academic discipline at the University of Ghana. In Chapter 7, I discuss the emergence and re-emergence of 'Black dance' and 'African dance' in Britain focusing on Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble and its contributions to the development of multiculturalism. In Chapter 8, I provide empirical evidential worth regarding the firm foundation laid by Adzido to the significance of Anlo-Ewe dance/ Ghanaian dance in Britain as an art form in crosscultural education.

Having articulated the significant knowledge embedded in Anlo-Ewe dance and suggested ways in which it can be harnessed and used in contemporary society, I offer in Chapter 9 my African perspective of how best this significant knowledge must be represented. I conclude with a

suggestion of building an African framework within which Anlo-Ewe dance/African dance and its related arts could be analysed.

## **Chapter 2: Dance as a Cultural Symbol of the Anlo-Ewe**

### **2.1. Ethnographic Reflections on Anlo-Ewe Culture**

Between June and September, 2011, I undertook intensive ethnographic research in Ghana, the first location of my fieldwork. During this period, I interviewed chiefs, elders, dancers, musicians, performers, dance students and lecturers at the University of Ghana and six community dance groups in Anlo-Eweland.

My interviews which were both formal and informal (depending on the preference of the participants) also interrogated traditional artists, three members of the Ghana Dance Ensemble and focused mainly on the conceptualisation, transmission and transformation of Anlo-Ewe dances in Ghana. While gaining insight into the Anlo-Ewe culture may be advantageous to my knowledge, I also recognise the fact that being an insider may occasionally make the researcher blind to the obvious. This research was informed by an interdisciplinary approach dominated by anthropology to present critical analysis of customs, institutions and traditions of Anlo-Ewe people and the various ways these elements are encoded in a holistic form called dance.

One of the ways by which many African and other societies communicate their values and beliefs is by maintaining cohesion in their culture through involving the members in sharing the same meaningful world usually represented or condensed in symbolic systems such as music, dance or religion. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1997) explored cultural representation as a signifying practice and noted that if two people interpret a phenomenon in roughly the same way, these people can be said to share one culture (Hall, 1997, 2). Hall's study, in a rich diversity of

social contexts and institutional sites, included the use of photography in the construction of national identity. These issues raised by Hall's work resonate in this study especially his view of these symbolic systems as tools that communicate concepts and meaning in articulating the poetics and politics of cultural representation.

Although there are many other scholarly views on culture relevant to this study such as those offered by Kwame Anthony Appiah (1992), John Blacking (1986), John Mbiti (1990) and Kwasi Wiredu (1980, 1996), which I will be referring to specifically in later chapters, it is evident that there is a wide range of contradictory scholarly opinion about what values, norms and beliefs should be measured to represent the concept of culture. The overarching concept that cuts across the many definitions however, points to the accumulated experience of a group of people in a geo-physical area, and this is what I am using here.

The role of dance in the process of self-reflection and identity construction for the Anlo-Ewe of Ghana has remained largely uninvestigated over the last six decades. Multiple perspectives of my research participants reinforced by studies of scholars including dance scholar, Modesto Amegago (2011), ethnomusicologist Daniel Avorgbedor (1986, 2001), ethnomusicologist James Burns (2009), Ewe music scholar Nisio Fiagbedzi (2005, 2009) and anthropologist Cathryn Lin Guerts (2002) suggest that these practices stand as a repository of Ewe knowledge system. Avorgbedor, Burns and Fiagbedzi explore Anlo Ewe culture mainly through music traditions of the people; Guerts focuses on anthropological investigation while Amegago examines music and dance performance traditions of the Ewes. Although this work draws partly on the above studies

especially Amegago's integrated style, the interdisciplinary approach adopted in a holistic framework differentiates my work from the work of these earlier scholars. Being able to undertake this fieldwork has deepened my knowledge in anthropology of dance and I find it necessary to pay tribute to the earlier scholars who extended their scholarly work into the study of movement and cultures.

Anthropological studies such as Franz Boas (1928), Edward Evans-Pritchard (1928), Margaret Mead (1949) and Adrienne Kaeppler (1978) for example, could be counted as outstanding scholars whose works advocated the importance of integrating a study of dance and movement into the study of human beings. These scholars fully recognised that dance forms part of a complex set of relationships culminating in the expression of cultural beliefs, ideas and values. Again the works of these scholars in diverse ways broke barriers and eventually generated transformation in anthropology. Boas for instance, broke away from the static taxonomical classification of race and emphasis on human biology and evolution by establishing a contextualised approach to the study of culture.

What stimulates this research is Boas' focus of the participant-observation method of fieldwork which differentiates the anthropologist from all other field researchers in that, anthropologists are aware that while they investigate people, they themselves are subject of investigation. Evans-Pritchard's fieldwork which investigated south eastern African communities living in Sudan, Rwanda and Kenya provided insight into elements of African dance cultures. Kaeppler's outstanding work in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century also rejuvenated a new awareness that

deepened the understanding of performing arts in their cultural contexts including traditional, social and political structures that are very important in modern cultural identity. It is also very important to acknowledge the work of dance scholar Paul Spencer (1985) which focused on socio-cultural analysis of dance in the global south, a relevant case that resonates in my study.

I also deem it necessary to include here the work of modern scholars such as Jane Desmond whose article 'Dance and Cultural Studies' (1993) made a call for dance to be included in the field of Cultural Studies. This study lends support to Desmond's argument that such a move could provide deeper understanding into formation of social identities through bodily movement. Similarly, dance and art critic Gay Morris (2009) reemphasised Desmond's call by proposing interdisciplinarity in dance studies which refers to the process of examining dance's relationship to cultural studies. Discussing the various ways in which interdisciplinarity has been defined within dance studies, Morris suggested that dance studies will succeed if it can demonstrate that dance has a significant social role to play.

Also relevant to this study is the work of anthropologist Edward M. Bruner (2005). Bruner's remarkable touristic and acculturative experience extends its discourse to one of Ghana's oldest monumental heritage- the Elmina Castle<sup>1</sup>. He explored Fante/Ghanaian and African diasporic cultures focusing on slavery and the return of the African diaspora in a three-part narrative of

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<sup>1</sup> First European trading post built on the Gulf of Guinea by the Portuguese in 1482 (See Bruner, 2005, 104). It is the oldest European building in existence south of the Sahara. First established as a trade settlement, the castle later became one of the most important stops on the route of the Atlantic slave trade. The Dutch seized the fort from the Portuguese in 1637, and subsequently took over all the Gold Coast in 1642. The slave trade continued under the Dutch until 1814. In 1872 the Gold Coast, including the fort, became a possession of the British Empire until 6<sup>th</sup> March, 1957. See Daaku, K.. Y. (1970) Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast 1600-1720. London: Oxford University Press.

"initial horror, diaspora resistance and joyous return" Bruner (2005, 122). Bruner examines the Ghanaian historical site in all its particularity, taking account of global and local factors, as well as the multiple perspectives of the various parties involved including the tourists, performance producers, the locals, the Castle authorities and the traditional authorities. Bruner's approach has significantly helped shape my thoughts about understanding the notion of heritage and practically how best to organise my data especially when drawing on multiple perspectives.

Additionally, dance scholars, Janet Adshead (1982) and Susan Foster (1986) in their scholarly works rejected the earlier notion that dance is an outlet for intuitive or unconscious feeling inaccessible to intellectual articulation. In sharing their thoughts on the nature of dance, they proposed the idea that analysis entails deciphering a dance's choreographic conventions and the meaning of these conventions can best be understood by studying the particular people and their ideologies.

Giving a thought to the above theories suggests that any attempt to study Anlo-Ewe dance demands a study of the Anlo-Ewe people, their history, philosophy, their music, movements of their dances and their entire culture. Undertaking the study of cultures in this way, especially that of dance, as Homi Bhabha, the language and literature scholar argues, "does not merely draw attention to its language and rhetoric; but also attempts to alter the conceptual object itself, where its positive value lies in displaying the wide dissemination through which we construct the field of meanings and symbols associated with its national life" (Bhabha 1990, 3).

While I consider Bhabha's argument relevant to my current study, it is equally important to consider the point made by a Ghanaian philosopher, Kwame Anthony Appiah that "the description of someone else's folk philosophy, without any serious analysis of its concepts or any critical reflection on how understanding the world with those concepts allow us to appreciate what may not be appreciated in other conceptual schemes, is surely a mere curiosity" (Appiah, 1992, 94). Appiah is of the view that analysing African philosophy in a Western context tends to be problematic. In as much as this is still a problem in 21<sup>st</sup> century scholarship, my argument emphasises the point that an attempt to resolve it must consider the guiding principles of the different African cultures such as their distinctive factors in the face of globalisation and multiculturalism of today's technological world. In view of this, I will proceed by taking a brief look at the research location as well as the historical background of the Anlo-Ewe as a people.

## 2.2. Field Location in Ghana

The map below provides a clearer picture of the research Location:

[Image removed for copyright reasons]



The research location as shown on the above map captures the Anlo-Ewe speaking settlements in south-eastern Ghana, covering the expanse along seamless stretches of white sandy beaches of the Atlantic Ocean, beginning from what is now known as the international border between Togo and Ghana; and due west to the eastern shores of the River Volta. The natural endowment and engagement of the landscape are well symbolised in names of their major towns and villages. For example, Keta, one of their district capitals simply means “the head of the sand.” About 30 miles away from Keta is another district capital called Denu, meaning “the beginning of palm trees” which also echoes the massive palm plantation this coastal area once boasted of. The extension of the area due northward of Keta holds a lagoon called the Keta Lagoon with the establishment of island settlements which became central to the early evolution of the Anlo-Ewe traditional state in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. (See for example, Amenumey, 1997; Ladzekpo, 1995 and Nukunya, 1969).

The close proximity of the settlements to the sea, however, offered the Anlo-Ewe their fishing occupation but sadly provided no safety from the frequent raids for slaves by European slave traders. As dancer and musician Kobla Ladzekpo (1995) puts it, these European slave traders “would navigate their ships easily to the shores of the ocean for their human cargos” (See also Akyeampong, 2001). According to Anlo elders, the memory of these raids and the loss of entire settlement populations have been deeply imprinted on the Anlo-Ewe consciousness through the holdings of oral tradition such as folklore, myths and songs. I provide a critical analysis of some of these myths and songs in the next chapter.

### **2.3. Fieldwork (Ghana)**

The Ghanaian field comprised of two sites namely, an urban setting referring to the city of Accra; and a traditional setting which refers to Anlo native land. The urban setting consists of dance schools and research institutions such as the University of Ghana Dance School, the International Centre for African Music and Dance, the Kwame Nkrumah Institute of African Studies which houses one of the two divisions of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, the National Theatre of Ghana which also houses the other division of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, Abibigromma (National Theatre Company) and a youth company called Dance Factory. The urban setting includes amateur dance groups in Accra and also Ewe dance clubs that have membership of those Ewes (usually clerical workers and civil servants) who migrated from their original rural areas into the city under occupational demand/motivation of employment. I interviewed dance artists, parents, and some university dance students and performers, instructors, three members of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, and affiliates of the School of Performing Arts, the Institute of African Studies, and the International Centre for African Music and Dance. My interviews focused on an investigation of Anlo-Ewe dances, their transmission in the indigenous environment and the academic setting.

In the academic setting students were interviewed on their understanding of the term 'African dance' and also on Ewe dance forms that are taught at the University of Ghana. Questions were also asked about their perspectives on the prevailing literature on such music and dance forms. Renowned scholars such as J. H. K.Nketia, Dartey Kumodzie, Nissio Fiagbedzi, Seth Asare Newman and Nii Sowah were interviewed on issues regarding the teaching of Ewe dances in the university curriculum; and how these fit within the overall framework of Ghanaian dance. I also

interviewed master percussionists, dancers, composers, and senior dance practitioners such as Christopher Ametefe, Prosper Atsu Ablordey and Johnson Keme on the origin, development, performance processes, functions, and meanings of some Ghanaian/West African music and dance forms and elements. Archival research was conducted at the Ghanaian School of Performing Arts at the University of Ghana and was supplemented through participation in and observation of music and dance classes and performances.

I gathered information at Ho in northern Anlo-Eweland during the Ghanaian Second Cycle Schools National Music and Dance Festival (5<sup>th</sup>-10th September, 2011), an annual music and dance festival organised by the Ghana Education Service for all Senior High Schools and funded by the State. I obtained information from the National Commission on Culture, an institution dedicated to research, documentation and preservation of Ghanaian/African cultural heritage. I also worked with the Ghanaian media especially radio and television stations where old recordings of dance and other traditional performances are kept. They include; the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC), Accra; Ghana Television (GTV), Accra; Volta Star Radio, Ho; and Jubilee Radio, Keta.

In the traditional setting, this study took place particularly in Anlo communities in the Volta Region including Anloga, Tegbui, Woe, Dornorgbor, Agorve, Avume, Keta, Afife, Anyako, Bedzame, Atiehipe, Genui, Whuti, Srongboe and Anyanui all of which can be located on the above map. In these communities my study employed observation, demonstration and participation in some traditional Ewe music and dance forms, such as *agbadza*, *adzida*, *ageshe*,

*agbekor, adzogbo, gadzo, nyayito, gahu, misego, afawu, atrikpui, and gota*, all of which I will be discussing in the next chapter. I have documented and filmed some of these performances in the local areas on social, ceremonial, and festive occasions. I have interacted with renowned master drummers, dancers and composers such as Kwadzo Nukunu, Kwaku Agorni Gatefe, Dumega Xorve Dunya, Supah Dunya and Atsu Zeye regarding the historical developments of Ewe music and dance and the creative/performative and instrument-making processes, linguistic concepts, and the ethical and aesthetic values of performances. The bulk of data I collected involves audio and video recording of live dance performances by traditional dance-drumming groups and artists during festivals, religious, and ritual ceremonies, and life cycle events; collection and documentation of songs, poems and proverbs through groups and individual oral interviews with local authorities and traditional scholars including kings, chiefs, priests and elders.

In addition to regular music and dance performances by ensembles, groups, and communities, festivals and life cycle events (which were not necessarily organised by or for me), data were gathered from other sources including ritual, religious, and other protected or 'secret' societies. The process of organising or getting access to some of these groups, genres, and performances has occasionally been extremely difficult and time consuming due to bureaucratic barriers. It should be noted that, being a native Anlo-Ewe and having a sound Ewe linguistic background as well as complete familiarity with the social and cultural geography of the area, was a great advantage. Besides getting easy access to research locations, I was able to freely and easily establish rapport and sustained mutual trust between the field assistants and other helpers as will be seen later. My knowledge of Anlo-Ewe protocol, ethics, and diplomacy facilitated the conducting of interviews, interacting with groups and interviewees, and understanding the often

hidden and implicit cultural distinctions and dynamics of different settings. Even with these advantages, however, I was constrained at certain levels, arenas, and scenarios to the point that extra spiritual arrangements had to be made such as *dzadodo* (asking permission with the offering of alcoholic beverages and cash to the gods) to be able to get access to the venues and to be granted audience. This was particularly important when visiting religious and secret groups. The chapter on religious dances provides insight into such spiritual arrangements.

During the preliminary investigation in the summer of 2010, and also in 2011 during a return visit to the field, I gained full access to document performances to which a non-member would not usually have access. These events include *Hongbato* (trance) ritual thanksgiving performance at Dornorgbor near Anloga; *Afli* (executioners) musical procession at Anloga; *Yeve* religious worship and burial services at Agbozume Klikor; *Korku* burial performance ritual at Genui and *Brekete* religious annual festival at Bedzame. Accessing these restricted events is one of the toughest challenges posed to the ethnochoreologist, anthropologist or any other field researcher. It should be noted here that the focus of this research was not on restricted and protected materials. Accessing such materials became part of the process of acquiring Anlo-Ewe esoteric knowledge, which the highest authority of the tradition endorsed with the belief that this would help me with the level of intuition to discuss unrestricted Anlo-Ewe cultural knowledge, which is the main aspect of this thesis.

In many cases, access would have been denied except that a higher-ranking devotee or an official with a clear, open and acceptable agenda was interested in my investigation. Challenging as this

exercise of accessing restricted material may appear, it is important to state here that the knowledge gained provides me insight and help in the analysis of open and unrestricted material. Among many obstacles, I needed to be diplomatic, flexible, and above all not allow the process to be influenced by my personal religious and spiritual beliefs, rights, needs, and interests. For example, during my time with Genui *Korku* performances, my two male assistants and I had to spend the night in a prescribed house, so that our movements and activities were closely monitored. The host also made sure no one slept in the same room or bed with the opposite sex, took alcohol, smoked cigarettes or used any prohibited product for at least 24 hours prior to the start of the performance. This special training, it must be noted, became a guiding principle that kept my concentration and interest of observing and recording how their religious practice uses dance to document and transmit any known Anlo-Ewe indigenous knowledge and cultural values. Anything outside the scope of the declared agenda could not be revealed here or elsewhere.

#### **2.4. Research Participants**

In addition to the list of informants I enumerated in the opening paragraphs, there were other research participants (mainly those participants in the traditional/local setting) with whom I lived and worked in Ghana; guides and associates who led me on the right path and taught me great skills of drumming, dancing, singing and other cultural practices of Anlo-Eweland. Guerts (2002) lays bare the difficulty involved in referring to these participants as 'informants' and I deem it appropriate to avoid this complexity by putting them in groups such as *nunyamɔfiawo* (educators and facilitators of Ewe indigenous knowledge); *dekɔnuwɔlawo* (tradition keepers); and *hesuawo/ametemeawo* (traditional scholars).

I use the term *nunyamorfialawo* to refer to educators and facilitators of Ewe indigenous knowledge who also arrange and coordinate research activities with individuals and groups. By the word *dekornuworlawo* (tradition keepers), I refer to Anlo-Ewe musicians and dancers/artists who continue to perform Ewe dance on non-profit making basis in the local Anlo-Ewe setting purely for the purpose of preserving the culture. I also use the word *hesuawo/ametemeawo* (traditional scholars) to refer to those Anlo-Ewe men and women who are not only the originators, composers, practitioners and perpetrators of Ewe indigenous knowledge but also reflect on it. I view them as the creative forces and authorities from whom academic researchers get their information. Having witnessed these master musicians, dancers and performers create, compose, invent, develop and own the knowledge of Anlo-Ewe dance and culture, it is evident that not only do they practise but also they theorise and determine the course of traditional knowledge and skills embedded in dance. It would therefore be inappropriate to label them as 'informants' when there is glaring evidence indicating that, what we research and document (from field notes to a complete book) is dependent on what they originate, create and produce.

## **2.5. Research Assistants**

In the course of my fieldwork, I employed the services of research/field assistants in Ghana who provided assistance in contacting, arranging, coordinating performing groups, artists, and other collaborators. These include Eric Baffour Awuah (non-Ewe speaker), a graduate of the University of Ghana Dance School; Godwin Gati, an Ewe dance instructor; Prosper Atsu Ablordey an Ewe master drummer/instructor of the University of Ghana Dance School; Juliana Kettor, an Ewe and a cultural officer in charge of dance under the Ghana Education Service;

Samuel Heman, an Ewe choir master and graduate music student of the University of Ghana; Abdallah Zakariah Zablong, Music and Dance Fellow of the Institute of African Studies (non-Ewe speaker) who doubles as a member of the Ghana Dance Ensemble; and Joyce Bekoe, public relations officer of the Ghana Dance Ensemble at the National Theatre who has a strong dance background but is a non-Ewe. They also helped in operating some of my recording equipment whenever the need arose. The combination of insiders and outsiders to play field assistant roles may be criticised by native Anlo-Ewes who still maintain that Ewe knowledge is esoteric and cannot be fathomed by aliens, but it is worth stating here that the combination of emic and etic perspectives of my research assistants significantly helped shape my views.

## **2.6. Historical Background of the Anlo-Ewe**

According to the Ewe historian Philips Kwabla Megabuio Ameevor (1994), the Anlo-Ewe people who currently live in the south-eastern corner of the Republic of Ghana settled in their present home around the later part of the 15th century (1474) after a dramatic escape from Notsie<sup>2</sup> in Togo. The escape and subsequent resettlement are commemorated in an annual festival known as *Hogbetsotso Za* (Migrating from Hogbe). Their journey from Notsie to their present home was full of many challenges and experiences that needed to be documented and stored for their younger generations. At a time when Western style documentation had not started in Africa, they were compelled to store these experiences in dance, which includes

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<sup>2</sup> An ancestral federated region currently within the borders of the modern state of Togo. The move from Notsie is said to be more of an escape than migration from a regime change in the city. Upon first arrival in Notsie, the current king, Adela Atogble, received them well, but after his death the successor, Agorkorli, ruled oppressively upon the Ewe. He ordered all elders killed. The city of Notsie was circumscribed by a large defensive wall which became a barrier to the Ewe devising escape. Upon consultation of the hidden elder, Tegli, the Ewe came up with an extravagant plan of escape which worked for them. (See Amenumey, 1968)



movements, gestures, songs, stories, re-enactments/festivals, rituals, religious and political ceremonies, philosophical concepts, and names; and these were passed down generations.

Green (1998) confirms this oral documentation with her observation that the death of keepers of this oral tradition will mean the death of their significant knowledge. Indeed, Green's observation provides an avenue for analysis of the importance of storytelling in Ewe communities. This brings to mind the question of why stories are regarded as storehouses of knowledge and inestimable experience in such communities. The art of storytelling may be seen as a representation of the history of the Ewe people considering the fact that these stories contain names of places and situations that no longer exist. Many of these stories make reference to past events that actually occurred in the life of the Ewe people. They represent real events and real human beings. In order to make the events instructional, believable, yet inoffensive, the names of the people involved are usually changed. Humans are replaced by birds, animals and fishes and this system of anthropomorphism according to story teller Anna Cottrell (2007) allows the stories to be more humorous and acceptable to the majority of the people.

While it may be fascinating to British society, the ability of a people to store their knowledge foundation in dance, it is important perhaps more imperative to find out why the Ewe people treat dance as part of life and the more encompassing nature of the Ghanaian phenomenon in contrast to how Westerners commonly view it as an activity separate from everyday life. Anthropologist and dance scholar, Andrée Grau did a comprehensive study of the Tiwi people of Australia showing how dance is linked to language, kinship, geography and fire (Grau 2003).

This integrated dance aesthetics echoes my current research into Anlo-Ewe dance forms in that, what I call the holistic nature of dance in which aesthetics cannot be fully realised without discussing its music, movement, language, symbolism, philosophy, religion, cosmogony and storytelling is also significant. I also agree with Grau that most of these commonalities do not establish any direct connection with dance in the Western world. To have a deeper understanding of this concept, it is important to examine what the Anlo-Ewe life is made up of.

## 2.7. The Four Elements of Anlo-Ewe Life

Working in the field informed me with the knowledge to engage the conceptual elements that underpin Anlo-Ewe dance. Notable among these is the realisation that the Anlo-Ewe, like many West African societies argue that there are four elements that constitute part of life. These are: *Gbe* (Sound), *Ga* (Rhythm), *Dzo* (Vibration) and *Dza* (Movement) all of which form a holistic art form, known as *Wu* (Dance or Dance-drumming) often regarded as one of the most impressive tools for effective communication. Oral tradition has it that at the birth of a child, the cry of the baby (**sound**) announces the arrival of a new soul. Later, this sound develops into **rhythm** which is powered by **vibration** causing the body to execute **movement**. This philosophy becomes the foundation upon which the Anlo-Ewe music/dance culture is regimented to exhibit the holistic nature of Ewe dance as a shared tradition of the people.

Before birth the Anlo-Ewe baby is said to be a 'chief' who sits on a stool in her mother's womb. Geurts (2002) documents the entire process of childbirth in many communities within the Anlo State. She states:

Birth attendants and village vixelawo in Srongboe, Whuti, Atorkor and Kplorwotorkor sometimes called the placenta 'zikpui', which is a term referring to a traditional African stool on which chiefs sit. While they were clear that in the Ewe language the word **amenor** was the technical or literal term used to describe the afterbirth, I often heard them talk about the placenta as a stool *zikpui* ( Geurts 2002, 86).

A member of Anlo-Ewe culture, who works as a registered midwife at Manchester Royal Infirmary in Manchester, stated that the notion of placenta as a stool is far fetched. For her, the importance of a stool in Ewe culture is to signify establishment and authority while the function of the placenta is to feed the baby. Does the function of the placenta represent any concept related to the significance of a stool in Ewe culture? This question may lead to all sorts of thought provoking arguments but, I think one of the best approaches to these debates is to first understand and appreciate the significance of a stool in Ewe culture as the issue is not so much the stool but the symbolism attached to it.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

## **2.8. Symbol of Anlo-Ewe Traditional Stool in Relation to the Unborn Baby**

A few Ewe scholars including William Komla Amoaku (1975); Ablade Glover (1992) and G K Nukunya (1969) in their various field of specialisation have discussed and documented the significance of a stool in Ewe-land. These scholars, in sharing their thoughts, have articulated the symbolic significance of an ancestral stool as the source of all traditional, political and spiritual power among the Ewe which is often treated as an object of veneration involving food and drink sacrifices to the ancestors. The above linkage reveals that even in the womb, the unborn child constantly receives rhythm from the mother which builds up as an established authority through

the placenta into a creative energy that enables the baby to produce its first music at birth. This observation about the Anlo-Ewe may cut across the whole continent of Africa and may extend to other parts of the world, noting here that it all depends on the kind of activities mothers perform in relation to their belief systems under the various occupations in the diverse cultures of the world.

Mothers can teach children how to talk just as teachers will teach them how to read and write but, when it comes to the cry of the baby, it is a feeling that cannot be learned or taught and for the Anlo-Ewe, this experience although it may be recognised globally, is totally different from for example, the phenomenon of professional mourners in contemporary African societies today who cry and wail on a contract basis to grace a funeral performance. It must be noted here that my emphasis lies on looking at the cry of a baby as a physiological way of announcing a new life and not a discussion of different types of crying or different ways of crying. Blacking (1973) argued that "essential physiological and cognitive processes that generate musical composition and performance may even be genetically inherited, and therefore present in almost every human being" (1973, 7).

## **2.9. *Gbe* (sound) as Multi-functional Element in Anlo-Ewe Life**

'*Gbe*' is fundamental to Anlo-Ewe life especially considering the polysemy of the word. For example, the expression '*Gbe*' or '*Gbelorlor*' also means greeting. Figure 4 below shows an exchange of greeting at the chief's palace in Anyako, one of the many Anlo communities. With a team of research assistants made up of Ewe story tellers, dancers, drummers and song composers, there was this exchange of greeting between my research team (visitors); and the elders of the royal entourage (hosts):

<i>Research Team (RT): Mixo gbe ndi</i>	(Receive the greeting of the morning)
<i>Elders (E): Ndi miafeme</i>	(Greeting, how is your home?)
<i>RT: Wodor</i>	(Well sound)
<i>E: Afeametowo</i>	(How are the people in your home?)
<i>RT: Woli</i>	(They are well)
<i>E: Deviwo</i>	(How are the children?)
<i>RT: Wodor</i>	(They had a sound sleep)
<i>E: Ablotsitowo</i>	(How are the Europeans?)
<i>RT: Woli</i>	(They are well)
<i>E: Yevuawo</i>	(How are the white people?)
<i>RT: Wodor</i>	(They had a sound sleep)
<i>E: Ameyiborwo</i>	(How are the black people?)
<i>RT: Woli</i>	(They are well)
<i>E: Wokata</i>	(And all the people?)
<i>RT: Wodor</i>	(They had a sound sleep)
<i>E: Wodor nyuie</i>	(We trust they are all well sound)
<i>RT: Megbetorwo</i>	(How are the community dwellers?)
<i>E: Wodor</i>	(They had a sound sleep)
<i>RT: Deviwo</i>	(How are the children?)
<i>E: Woli</i>	(They are well)
<i>RT: Duakata</i>	(How is the whole community?)
<i>E: Wodor</i>	(Very well sound)
<i>RT: Miedor nyuie</i>	(We trust you are all well)
<i>E: Miedor</i>	(Yes, we are well)

Although the above salutation partly explains why the greeting process may take relatively longer in West African cultures, it is important to throw more light on greeting as a cultural institution in Anlo-Eweland. *Gbe* or *Gbelorlor* (greeting) refers to the aesthetically pleasing

integration of sound and vibration to express love and care for members of the community with children being the priority on the list. Having a sound sleep in Anlo-Ewe context amounts to a peaceful and healthy life and this theme runs across the entire system of greeting. What is very fascinating about this institution is that during the exchange of greeting, the harmonious call and response sound integration becomes music and the gestures performed by the members including nodding of the head and handshakes could be said to constitute dance. The importance of greeting in Anlo-Ewe culture also reveals that the upbringing of children as well as the welfare of the community members is a joint and united responsibility. Members of the community have a collective responsibility of making sure that children are trained according to the shared values and norms in line with the traditions of Anlo-Ewe society.

In British society, it seems at times that one can choose to greet whenever one wants to, but in the case of the Anlo-Ewe, failure to greet amounts to gross disrespect for your neighbours and the entire community and this may carry severe punishments including payment of a fine. Again in the above greeting, the Ewe community elders, having gathered that I had travelled from England, went to the extent of finding out the health and wellbeing of the British people (of all races) as well as the welfare of the whole of Europe.

The importance of greeting is also often reflected in the time spent on the act due to the different activities involved. In Gahu, one of the Anlo-Ewe social dances, there is short humorous piece of performance that explains the importance of greeting in the diverse cultures of the West African

sub region and the world. The people of Genui in the Volta Region of Ghana performed this piece at a local festival and the following song formed an integral part of it:

<i>Metor ne mamanye be ndi ago</i>	(I respond to my grandmother's morning greeting)
<i>Ndi ago afeamatorwo de ha</i>	(Morning greeting -how are the people in the home?)
<i>Gbe ya miedona le miadenyigba</i>	(This is the way we greet in our land)
<i>Gbe ya miedona le miadenyigba</i>	(This is the way we greet in our land)
<i>Anlishi yevuwo be gudumorni</i>	(The English people say good morning)
<i>Aguda yevuwo be bonsua</i>	(The French people say bonjour)
<i>Hawusatorwo be senugida</i>	(The Hausa speakers say senugida)
<i>Xorsetorwo be Haleluya</i>	(The Christians say haleluya)

The signature gestures performed to reaffirm the greeting styles of the various groups mentioned in the above song differ and reflect the amount of time involved. This particular performance has the potential to explain some cultural differences relating to the use of time. For instance, while the gesture assigned to English greeting in this piece of dance is just a hand wave which could be performed in a second, the Anlo-Ewe gesture includes a handshake, open arms and facial expression including the usual contraction and release of the torso. Whatever the difference may be, it only underscores the Ewe frame of mind of placing the whole above the individual to the extent of viewing people from other cultures as their extended family members.





4. The Chief and elders of Anyako receive the researcher after *Gbelorlor* (Traditional greeting) 17-06-2011

Another cultural practice of the Anlo-Ewe that uses '*Gbe*' is prayer. '*Gbedoda*' is the term referring to the use of sound integration with movements and gestures to invoke and activate the spirit and working powers of the creator of the universe through their ancestors. Most of these traditional prayers are done through *Tsifodi* (Pouring of Libation).

At the *Hongbato*<sup>3</sup> Shrine in Dornorgbor near Anloga, after the usual donation of alcoholic drinks from my research team made up of some members of a religious dance group, a university dance professor and two photographers, one of the elders in the shrine was asked by the leadership of

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<sup>3</sup> A very important Anlo-Ewe deity that helps to solve fertility problems for women. This deity, according to Anlo-Ewe tradition keepers, was brought from Benin and kept in a village called Genui by one Vorsa Koklo. During the second world war (1939-1945) soldiers attempted to destroy the shrine of the deity and in the process, the fertility god was moved to its present location at Atsiavi in the Volta Region of Ghana. Children born through the help of this deity are given identification names and facial marks.

the shrine to pray as an official way of accepting my study of their culture. The elderly man took a medium size calabash and filled it with a mixture of corn flour and water. He then took off his shirt and rather wrapped a white cloth around his waist and headed towards the centre of the shrine for the pouring of libation. He raised the calabash up and showed it to the four corners of the world before lowering it down to his waist level. He then spoke prayerfully in a poetic style, sounding like he was communicating with a higher authority that connects humankind to the Divine. The whole act sounded in Ewe Language below:

*Wo Ho dziedo, Hoe do ta, Hoe do xor, Hoe do anyi. Wo Mawu kliti-kata, Wo adanu wor tor, Ebe yewo asi wo afor. Wo Mawu mavormavortor, mie de akpe nawo be nekplo amedzro vee nami be woa sro miafe dekornu. Ke nusi miebia le dor sia worwor me enye; Lamese aborka-drika, Ahe neto dzi, Evor ne to dzi, Edor nefo mianu, Eku nefo miata, Akoedagbe vidagbe. Togbeawokata nano ngor nami. Fafa neva, Fafa neva fafa neva daa.*

Translated to English below by Dr. Datey Kumodzie and the researcher:

Salutations to you, who are heaven and earth. Salutations to you, thou who are the light of our mind. Salutations to that essence dwelling, in the infinite depths of our hearts. Salutations unto you, the controller of our body. You, who are the source, the creator, the life force and the mind behind the universe. The all-skilful creator who created us hands and feet. You are the everlasting self generator and the sustainer of all life. Thank you for bringing us a visitor to study our culture. As we work with him together, grant us the spirit of wisdom. Lift the veil of ignorance and darkness covering our mind. Dispel the state of fear, confusion and superstition griping our mind. Destroy disease and sickness that gnaw at the root of our life. Let death and destruction depart from our life May our life be blessed with success and prosperity. May our children be a source of blessing and peace. Grant us good health and longevity. May the spiritual life force forever remain flowing through our limbs. Peace and blessing unto thee! Peace and bliss unto thee! Peace!

This short prayer may be seen as a solo performance, but the number of people standing around the soloist is enough to suggest that it is a communal activity. Every sound he made while his hand continued to stir the mixture in the calabash was not only responded to but also was reaffirmed by the group through the use of movements and gestures. In the Chapter 4 on religious dances, I provide detailed discussion of how such religious worships of the Anlo-Ewe are heavily dominated by dance.

## **2.10. Anlo Philosophy and Anlo State**

In West Africa, particularly in Anlo-Eweland, names are very significant. Ewe names have specific meanings and significance in various categories such as birth day names where people are given a name according to the day they were born. For instance a boy born on Friday has the name Kofi and a girl born on Friday is called Afi. There are birth positional names that are assigned to the first, second, third, fourth child etc. For example, the third consecutive male child is called Abesa or Mensa and its female counterpart is called Mansa.

The Anlo-Ewe also believe in reincarnation and this system allows the new baby to use the name of the departed person that has been reincarnated. Guerts explores the anthropological elements of the Anlo-Ewe and captures this practice drawing largely on Suzanne Preston Blier's study on Ewes (1995) which uses ideas of enactment, re-enactment and substitution to describe the tie that binds parent and child together. She explains: 'The ancestral sponsor as Blier designates it, plays a vital role in the child's identity and personality formation' (Guerts, 2002, 174).

There are also religious names, royal names, names for twins and occupational names that tell various stories of Anlo state of being in the world. Therefore, any move to study, understand and appreciate the complexities of Anlo-Ewe culture primarily requires insight into the meaning and significance of its name. The word Anlo in the Ewe language simply means to coil or to fold. Having established the meaning of the word Anlo gives us the opportunity to etymologically find out its significance.

Ameevor (1994) documents from the oral history that this Ewe group on their migration journey led by Amega Whenya went through several life challenges resulting in the death of many (1994, 9). Ameevor's account also makes us understand that their leader became very weak and had to be carried in a hammock for the rest of the journey until at a point, when he was lowered to the ground upon his request and there and then, he made this declaration:

*"Nyea mea nenlo de afisia eye afia deke yiyi mega le nunye o."*

(I have coiled here and cannot move any longer).

In another version of the same narrative, Agbotadua Kumassah, a royal, teacher and Anlo tradition keeper states that: "On reaching Anloga, Amega Whenya made the famous proclamation '*Menlo*' which literally means 'I have coiled' with reference to his advanced age" (Kumassah 2009,36). Clearly, Amega Whenya's exhaustion from the long journey he had had with his people over many years compelled the group to settle at their present home *Anlo*, a name which came out of their leader's curled posture depicting exhaustion. This body posture according to many Ewe historians, musicians, teachers and royals is recognised widely as the foetal position signifying the protection of their spiritual and political power with which they were able to escape from Nortsie. The name could also be conceptualised as rebirth in a new land.

Ewe scholar Komla Amoaku (1975) refers to Nortsie as symbolising the 'centre' where their spiritual and political power originated thereby endorsing the notion of other storytellers who claim that the Ewe migration experience is a sacred one. He notes, "The history of their dispersion from this 'centre' is, therefore, often told under oath, for it is regarded as sacred history" (Amoaku 1975, 88). Scholars have discussed the various versions of the same narrative about the Anlo- Ewe exodus with the central point stressing on the word *nlo*. Guerts examines the poetics, aesthetics and iconicity of *nlo* and concludes that the word with its body posture constitutes an idea and experience of dualistic phenomena such as freedom and exhaustion, joy and sorrow, humour and grief (Guerts 2002, 120).

## **2.11. 'Adagana' the Linguistic Key to Anlo-Ewe Esoteric Knowledge**

Speaking to many natives of Anlo, most of whom are musicians, dancers, story tellers, herbalists, sculptors, drum and other instrument makers and other visual artists during my fieldwork in Ghana in addition to the little scholarly material readily available on this group of Ewes produced many perceptions leading to the discovery of *Adagana*<sup>4</sup>. This is an Ewe term that refers to the philosophical key to the metaphorical meaning of names, places and events in Anlo land. Applying this key to a name enables it to reach its completeness by bringing the extended version of the name under analytical discussion through which the historical event that gave birth to the name is discovered. For example, the name *Akplaga* simply means the powerful one. This man may have displayed strength of his power in an event to earn the name but without considering the extended version of the name, all these historical information on *Akplaga* would still be unknown. But when looked at through the lens of '*adagana*', the full name will read as follows:

*Akplagatsitsixoxo, ebe ye do wu azizawo du.* (The strong and ancient powerful one who provided music and commanded the dwarves to dance to it). With this extended version, we now know

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<sup>4</sup> Adagana is the foundation of Anlo-Ewe esoteric knowlegbe. It is the key owned by a section of the people, usually the elders and it is used to re-interpret the language and also to empower the mind to discover the hidden secretes of nature (See Kumodzie 2009, 23).

that the strength of this man's spiritual power was able to bring the dwarves, who are considered as a powerful species, under his control. Applying 'adagana' to the name Anlo automatically subjects its extended form below to analytical discussion:

*Anlo Kotsiklolo, naketi deka no dzome binu. Anlo gordorlifi, du nome mase emenya* (Anlo, a single state, a single firewood that produces flames of fire in cooking food for the nation. Anlo, a state characterised with secrecy and high level of total security). See figure 3 below.



5. Mekpli, traditional Anlo cooking technology symbolising the extended form of the name Anlo. By Noviha UK

Therefore the extended version of Anlo charges all its members/dwellers/citizens to withdraw into a state of solitude for the purpose of attaining spiritual, emotional and physical oneness in order to provide security to the state without any slightest leakage of information to outsiders. In other words, whoever wants to effect a change in Anlo society must first withdraw into a state of seclusion, renounce the world, practice discipline; and become one with himself/herself and the whole of creation. Having achieved the totality of the above, then s/he, without causing too much agitation or making too much noise must without being noticed transform their society single-handed. It is on this philosophy that Amega Whenya and his nephew Sri founded *Anlo du ta blaetorvoade* (The 36 different communities that constitute Anlo State) with Anloga, the place of the famous declaration being the traditional capital.

My fieldwork in Ghana also captured the last sayings of Torgbui Sri, the first *Awoamefia* (Paramount Chief) of the Anlo-Ewe (1458-1504). These sayings, according to Anlo historians and scholars such as Kumassah, (2009) and Amegago (2011) form a significant part of Anlo philosophy and constitute the principles upon which the Anlo moral fibre is regimented. The following words according to many *nunyamorfialawo* with whom I worked were the last sayings of their first king in 1504- shortly before he died.

## **2.12. Torgbui Sri Fe Nya Mamleawo (The Last Words of Torgbui Sri)**

*Vinyewo Miga Nloe Be O! Vinyewo miga nloe be o! Nuvowola dugbalaе wonye. Migbe nya na miaviwo, eye miahe wo le dzodzoenyenyе blibo me. Elabena wotoe nye du la. Egba koe nye miator. Ke etso la, miega li o. Mida wo de modzodzoe dzi. Bena du la natsi de edzi. Le nunya, lolo kple kale me. Atsyonue visetonu nye na dzilawo kple duko sia. Agblotsyui kple sui wonye. Eganye adzagba kple sika. Duawo fe lekewonuawo. Eyae nye nunya, sidoa duko sia duko de ngo. Eyae nye*



*dzidzor le agbe sia megbe. Ee! Ewo segbedzi, ele du de te! Eyata vidzagla netro ko, efe agbenono ne so. Fenyila nedzudzo nkugatoto. Alakpato nesro nyatefetoto. Ke fiafiwo kple amesroxolawo yala, gome adeke meli nawo le Anlo fe kesinonuwo dome o. Nye dukowo kple amesiawo madu hotsuinyui o, negbe dzaa, de wotro nonome! Le esiata la, vi si be yemele to do ge o la, miakpo nofe ne le Torkor Atorlia.* (Curled from F.K. Fiawoo's non-fiction novel titled *Toko Atolia*, 1943)

Here is the English Version: Translated by Dartey Kumodzie and the researcher.

### **My Children Never Forget This!**

My children never forget this! Evildoer is a destroyer of nation. Reprimand your children and educate them in absolute righteousness. For the nation belongs to them. Set them on righteous ways, so the nation will grow in wisdom, love and valour. An ornament is the obedient child to the parents and the nation; Diamond and ruby s/he is as well as pearl and gold. For the treasure, that is the beauty and pride of a nation, is the knowledge foundation upon which it stands to construct its progress. It is the source of joy and happiness in this world. That, every citizen should acquire this knowledge and try to live according to its laws. So s/he can help the nation make sustainable progress. Therefore, let the unruly child mend his/her ways and let his/her life assume rightful ways. The debtor should stop hankering after the luxuries of life. Let the liar learn to love truth. As for the thieves and the adulterers, they have no share in the treasures of the Anlo State. My nation and these unruly ones can never share one- fortune, except that they decide to mend their lawless ways. Therefore, that child who will choose to remain unruly will certainly find his/her way to the Fifth Landing Shore" (Fiawoo 1983). See also Amegago (2011) and Kumassah (2009).

My interviews with chiefs and elders of Anlo suggest that the above sayings of their sacred king is highly regarded as a constitution under which the Anlo State must be governed and this explains the popular view in Ghana that the Anlo-Ewe are honest, respectful, hardworking and law abiding among the seventy-nine diverse ethnic groups in this West African nation. Reintegrating myself into Anlo community with full participation in their daily routines of farming, fishing, gathering of firewood, fetching water as well as their drumming and dancing



activities confirms the fact that their daily decision making processes and other routines as well as their entire moral state of living are based on this constitution.

The Anlo elders also explained that the last saying of their sacred king is considered as a repository of rules and regulations that reinforce the moral and ethical teachings to ensure the eradication of criminals and crime from Anlo society. Dartey Kumodzie, one of the few authorities of Anlo-Ewe knowledge made it clear that "Anlo State can only develop spiritually, economically and culturally by upholding the principles and mechanisms that underlie its establishment and these principles are the spoken words of our first sacred King Torgbui Sri I" (Kumodzie, 2011).

It is worthy of note to stress here that the Anlo-Ewe communities like many other human societies are not perfect and therefore, not every member follows the social ethics. As will be seen in the next chapter, I elaborate on some social vices including promiscuity and rape with the emphasis on how Anlo elders deal with such offences according to the cultural norms.

In all the last words Torgbui Sri spoke, *Toko Atolia* has become the most significant one with many story tellers referring to it as a sacred location where criminals were executed in those ancient times, with particular emphasis on a drum text sounding "*miedeza miegboza*" (We went by night and came by night) as a way of announcing the execution ceremony on a special drum called *Nyikorwu*<sup>5</sup>. This, the Anlo-Ewe tradition keepers put in plain words that those who were found guilty of crimes such as killing, stealing, snatching a neighbour's spouse or leaking any

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<sup>5</sup> Special set of talking drums that announced execution of criminals under Anlo ancient justice system. This set of drums was used strictly as the only medium of communication regarding the punishment of criminals by execution. Traditional scholars explained that the set was constituted by two drums-*Wuga*, which produced a male sound and *wuvi*, which produced a female sound. (See Fiagbedzi, 1997).

security information of the Traditional State to outsiders would be sent to a secret location in Anloga called *Toko Atolia* (The Fifth Landing Shore) to face the ancient justice system of Anloland. In this ancient system of justice, according to the Anlo elders, criminals were buried alive with their heads outside allowing vultures and other scavengers to feed on their eyeballs.

The toughness of this punishment which is no longer used in Anlo-Eweland may raise many questions about the fairness of this justice system. But the Anlo-Ewe elders explained that criminals are perceived to be forces of destruction in a form of epidemic threatening to infect the whole society and hence the need for their eradication. Questions on the fairness of the justice system in Anlo-Eweland led this study to another discovery of how kinaesthesia is employed as a tool of achieving a sense of balance which represents the neutrality of adjudicators in cases involving members of the community. This is particularly visible in the climax of Agbadza dance, a case I elucidate in the next chapter.

### **2.13. Defining Characteristics of the Anlo-Ewe**

It is very important to throw more light on the term Anlo which is central to the past, present and perhaps the guiding principles that direct the future of Anlo-Ewe knowledge. Earlier studies of Anlo-Ewe such as Amenumey (1986), Locke (1978) and Nukunya (1969) focused on music and social organisations of the people and this resulted in a huge scholarly gap in Ewe studies until the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century which witnessed and continues to experience ground breaking works with different approaches by scholars including Guerts (2002), Burns (2009) Badu-Young (2002) and Amegago (2011).

Guerts' intensive field work provided a deeper understanding of principles and mechanisms that underlie what could be called the Anlo state of being in the world. She also observed that the word Anlo functions as: language –*Anlogbe* (Anlo dialect), ethnicity –*Anlotorwo* (Anlo people) and place-*Anlodu* (Anlo State). Consequently, Anlo-Ewe as a people can be identified by such factors as linguistic elements well embedded in music, movement and gestures, food, clothing, occupation, customs and institutions all of which dwell in a holistic form called dance.

Therefore the defining characteristics of Anlo people are now well embedded in occupation, food, costume and the stylistic performance of customary and traditional rites such as baby naming ceremonies, marriage rites, installation of a chief and funerals. The Anlo by virtue of their historical settlement are generally *torsilawo* (fishermen), *agbledelawo* (farmers) and *adelawo* (hunters). This study captures some very interesting activities that take place under these occupations.

#### **2.14. Fishing**

The term *tordorworwor* refers to the exploitation of lagoon, lakes, rivers and other hydrosphere including the sea in search of fish. This, in Anloland, is divided into two categories known as: 1, *Amusisi* (fishing in rivers, lakes and lagoons) usually by the people who live close to the Keta Lagoon; and 2, *Yevudorkpokplor* (Marine Fishing). Activities under *amusisi* include, *asabudada* (use of cast net), *dordodo* (using long net), *xadodo* (using a straw trap to catch such fishes as tilapia, shrimp and crab), *akpalefedede* (the use of bare hands in catching fishes mainly tilapia).

The term *yevudorkpokplor* refers to fishing expeditions in the sea using the seine net. Fishermen under this category are usually those who live on the coastal land stretching from Aflao to the Volta River Estuary in Fuveme near Anyanui. This process involves the use of boats operated by manpower energy. In recent times such companies have adopted the use of outboard motors which helps facilitate the process quicker than the use of manpower. Sociologist Emanuel Akyeampong (2001) explores the relationship between the Keta Lagoon and the sea and notes: "The Anlo experience with sea fishing was frustrating. By the eighteenth century, a variety of set nets and purse-nets were used on the Gold Coast, together with hook and line and diverse form of traps and dams in sea, river and lagoon fishing" Akyeampong (2001, 73). In all these activities, the main focus is to bring home enough fish which women process in various ways.

In communities such as *Anyako, Genui, Anyanui, Dzita, Kplorwotorkor, Atorkor, Dakordzi, Srongboe, Whuti, Atiehiye, Anloga, Woe, Keta* and *Afiadenyigba*, this study witnessed women who used such methods as *Layiyi* (smoking), *kalamitortor* (frying) and *akpatogui* (salting and drying) to preserve large quantities of fish, one of the major commodities in their local markets. What was further fascinating and directly relevant to this study is the role music and dance play in these occupations. Listening to the fishermen sing and row their boats in a unique movement style of unison was more than motivational spirit. Under the *yevudorkpokplor*, the long net would have to be dragged ashore and this sees the fishermen line up facing the sea and with their hands firmly on the net and its strong rope, they engage in some sort of tug of war with the sea (See the action in figure 4). This dragging of the net with the usual singing backed by percussive orchestration dominated by bamboo music provides the fishermen a fertile ground for creativity and innovation.



6. Abirikobo Fishing Company at Atiehiye near Anloga (26/10/2011).

It is worth mentioning that under marine fishing, the Anlo fishermen continue their creative process in music and dance using materials they come across at any moment. These materials may be in a form of occurrences in the fishing company or the fishing environment. For instance, if they believe they are being made to work more and are being paid less, they articulate their concerns about the injustice in a song that does not have to be written, composed and practised. It flows spontaneously and those who share the same concerns will then join their voice in the song to the hearing of their employers. In this case, they are not only creating a song but also they are using their creative piece as a tool for social criticism and protest. Some of their songs may be proverbial while others may be straight forward. The following song was sung by the fishermen who worked for Kwadzo Kede's Fishing Company in the 1970s.

*Atadi meno ati nuti doa nku me ne agbleto o* (Pepper does not attack its farmer's eye)

*Ne mete de enu dee megbona ve nkua gbo* (Unless the farmer's eye gets too close)

<i>Amekatatutue le kpodzi gbloa dzokliga fe nya</i>	(Who on land can talk about seine net)
<i>Ameadeke megbloge o</i>	(Nobody will think about that)
<i>Koklonyilawo ye gblo ha fe nya hee</i>	(Poultry farmers are concerned about pigs)
<i>Oh, wo mege na o, be degenue dzia ge</i>	(Not to moan but to be responsible)
<i>Ege ya miedzi de mievakede doa nu</i>	(This is the reality of the contract we signed)
<i>Kede fe dor menye plasi dor o hee</i>	(Kede's job is not pleasurable)
<i>Doryawu ye ge hee</i>	(This job will kill me)
<i>Yevudor wunyeye sipa</i>	(Marine fishing will kill me prematurely)

The above song, according to Anlo fishermen was sung spontaneously by a young fisherman/employee called Dakpleto in the 1970s, who felt during the usual dragging of the fishing net that their employer, Kede was enslaving them. In the song he articulated that although they were being treated unfairly, there was no one to blame other than themselves; and with the main point saying that if they had not signed a contract with Kede and his company, there would have been nothing to force them into such sufferings. Marine fishing in Anlo is perceived as one of the most dangerous occupations. Although Anlo-Ewe people live on a sandy land between the sea and the lagoon giving them the options of farming and fishing, they are mostly forced to adopt the latter which is considered to be a risky occupation. Anlo elders attributed this pressure of going into a dangerous venture to the scarcity of sufficient farm land in the midst of the economic hardship confronting the Anlo-Ewe people. Nukunya (1989) summarises it below:

In the case of the Anlo-Ewe, it was the economic circumstances resulting from the scarcity of land that led to the adoption of the profession. It will mean also that those in possession of sufficient farm lands would not take to full-time fishing. There is the additional implication that people turn to fishing because it is the only viable alternative to farming. It is further asserted that in financial terms full-time fishing is a precarious and risky occupation which does not ensure any guaranteed income and comfortable living (Nukunya, 1989, 155).

The traditional scholars I spoke to in such fishing environments confirmed the above notion as a great life threatening challenge. They also spoke about how the Anlos who live in the coastal areas create dances to depict not only the fishermen and their risky activities but also employing the visual patterns of the sea and its waves in dance as a tool for moral and ethical teaching.



7. *Kotoku*, the container which houses the fish caught during the process and is also the last part of the net to arrive ashore.

In an Anlo fishing community called Whuti, I documented *Atsiafulegedi*, a social dance created from the movement of sea waves. *Atsiafulegedi* is a combination of two Ewe words: *Atsiafu* (the sea), and *Alegede* ( a behaviour pattern full of gossip, lies, hypocrisy, backbiting and other nefarious activities that render one's life ethically incorrect). The sea's ability to bring and take objects is likened to behaviour of rumour monger. My research participants, most of whom are descendants of the creators of this humorous dance explained that the name describes the swash, backwash, splashes and the waves of the sea as a perfect picture of the word *Alegede*. In the



coastal Anlo areas when there is mention of the sea, you perhaps think of fishermen but this dance makes no allusion to any fishing activity. *Atsiafulegedi* dance therefore uses the sea as a concrete material to educate the youth about unacceptable behaviour patterns that are likely to bring division among the members of the community. The dance, usually done in pairs (male and female), imitates the waves of the sea. This is seen in the main movement where the torso sways exactly like the sea waves. The waist helps the torso in executing the movement while the legs also play a very important role in controlling the steps. Just as the sea splashes go up and down, in the same way the dancer's whole body also moves from a high level to a low level, generating what is normally referred to as 'continuous up and down movement' in a perfect legato manner.

In my fieldnotes I captured some of the features of the dance:

*For the girls, the left hand stays in front of the dancer with the palm facing the dance floor and remains in that position while the right hand moves rhythmically under and above the static left hand. The knees are slightly bent to ensure a free up and down movement of the body. The waist wiggles in collaboration with the contraction and release of the upper torso. The boys have their own movement which involves the body standing up straight position with the hands clapping rhythmically in the front and back of the dancer. This is a staccatto movement, which involves the straight body of the dancer jumping and landing on both feet in harmony with the claps (Field note-September, 2011).*

The dance performed in pairs consisting of a male and a female does not only create the opportunity of socialisation for the youth but also it teaches them about the need to eschew from nefarious behaviour patterns and to embrace acceptable principles and mechanisms of social life. In other words, the dance, *atsiafulegedi* is used to enforce Anlo-Ewe social ethics as endorsed by the cultural norms. Traditional scholars explained that the fast rate at which *atsiafulegedi* spread during the 1960s and 70s enabled it to cross its Anlo borders extending to other Ewe groups



including the Agave Ewes of Adutor. Answers to questions regarding the rapid spread of this dance were centred on the point that it can be easily choreographed and re-choreographed with much emphasis on the dramatic fusion, which can be used as a tool in educating young people about some social vices in the community.

### **2.15. Farming**

The Anlo-communities around Keta, Tegbi, Woe, Avume, Agorve, Anloga, Whuti through to Anyanui engage in vegetable farming in the cultivation of *sabala* (shallots). There are other occasional crops such as: *fetri* (okra), *tumatre* (tomatoes), *atadi* (pepper) and *agbitsa* (garden eggs). Shallot farming is one of the main economic activities on which the livelihood of the people depends. Most of the homes I visited in Anloga were built with storage facilities to cater for the large amount of shallot harvest the family has to deal with. According to Nukunya (1989), Anloga, which also happens to be the traditional capital of Anlo, is the centre of the shallot industry.



8. Mr. Wonder Gaddah in the first stage of shallot processing called *sabalafefe*

The usual hospitality of the Anlo-Ewe is amazing. This goes to the extent that when you visit a community as a researcher, the people see you as a member of their family and treat you as such. This enabled me to participate fully in family occupational activities such as processing of harvested shallots and other vegetables as well as general work in the farm. The observation here points to the fact that such activities do not move smoothly without the employment of music and movement.



9. Final stage of shallot processing in Anloga-(July, 2011)

## 2.16. Hunting

Hunting as an occupation in Anlo-Eweland flourished in the past and this promoted the consumption of bush meat by the people. Also, hunters searched for animals such as *avugbee* (the antelope) which is a very important animal in the music and dance cultural life of the Anlo-Ewe simply because its hide is the appropriate membrane for most Anlo-Ewe drums. Godwin Gati an Ewe dance instructor explained that apart from hide from antelope, python and alligator, tails of other animals such as horses, bush cows, wolves and buffalo were cut and designed into whisks which are now used as singing and dancing props. My interview with a few hunters revealed that some dances in Ewe communities today were discovered by hunters during their hunting expeditions. Adela Gasu, a 78 year old hunter in Anloga states: "Movements in such dances depict the footsteps of animals and other mysterious creatures. Some of the dances

revolve around a theme reflecting some encounters such people had with the Devine through the many spiritual modes available to them" (Adela Gasu, September, 2011). He however made it clear that the Wild Life Organisation in Ghana stood against hunting and this led to enactment of policies leading to the eventual abolishment of the occupation in the early 1980s. Consequently, drum makers in Ghana today rely on the skin of goat, ram and cow.

### **2.17. *Akple* the Staple Food of the Anlo-Ewe**

The staple food of the Anlo-Ewe, *Akple* is the factor that identifies a kitchen as belonging to an Anlo person. *Akple* is a solid food prepared with a mixture of *ewɔ* (cornflour) and *agbelimɔ* (cassava dough) in a process of boiling and kneading. The main utensils involved are: a special cooking pot called *gaze* or *akpledaze*; a special cooking sick called *akpledatsi* which is the main tool used in the kneading process; and a flat wooden spoon used in collecting the cooked *akple* from the cooking pot into the various plates for consumption. It is important to mention here that *akple* is not a complete meal without its corresponding soup, sauce or raw pepper well stuffed with *nudonui* (fish or meat).

In Bedzame, an Anlo community near the Agricultural College in Ohawu, I attended the funeral of a prominent traditional priest who died at a remarkable age of 145 years. *Akple* was prepared in large quantities to feed thousands of mourners who attended the funeral. The accompanying soup was prepared with meat from three cows that were slaughtered the previous day as part of the funeral rites. Godwin Gati summarised below the significance of slaughtering three cows as part of the funeral:



According to our tradition, any prominent person who died in the community must be honoured according to the level of contribution s/he made to the development of the land during their life time. This is why ancestorship is very important. The cows were slaughtered to demonstrate that first; the man was Osofo (a traditional priest) of high reputation, a title equivalent to that of a Bishop in Christendom. Second, he spent 140 years on earth and the most of all; he participated well in the shared traditions of our people, promoted and held Anlo traditional values in high esteem during his life time (Gati, 2011).

**Obituary**

ógbui adrakpanya v, Tògbui Alágbò, Tògbui Dzáká, Fátéle wòlé Dotsey, Sòkú àl'Àfífé Kòbíla, Agbía, of Dzogadze, Tògbui Amányo, of America, Tògbui Kòrdor, Tògbui Sòglò, Tògbui Tuafli, Mama Danyogah, all of Ohawu, Tògbui Dódzeavudzi Atrímfo of Abor, Tògbui Agormekpo of Wuti, Tògbui Ametume of Vume, Tògbui Dzogegi of Atsiaveme, Sorfor.k. Husunagbo, Kofi Afordoanyi, Billy Husumugbo, all of Bedzame, Besa Gosu, Dotsey Agbenusa, Megbede Darra, all of Afife Kòbíla Somenu' of Vume. Wish to announce the sudden death of their beloved:

**Megbede Dzanyiekpor Edosu**  
(Alias Sakpana)

**FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS ARE AS FOLLOWS:-**

**Wake - keeping:** 5th August 2011 at Ohawu Bedzame  
**Burial Sev:** 6th August 2011 at Ohawu - Bedzame  
**Widow:** Sorfor.k. Hátaka Kòsawor Dzákadzi  
**Children:** Soworlo Dosu, Polo Dosu, Akuwor Dosu, Amewugah Dosu, Afwor Dosu, Agbobe Dosu, Alugba Dosu, Lucky Dosu.  
**Grand - Children:** 48  
**Great Grand Child:** 87

**Chief Mourners**

Sorfor. k. Husunagbo, Kòkú Gbèli of Amansu, Kòbíla Somenu' of Vume, Kòkú Àfífé Sòkúwù, Kporfor, Mamagah Afordoanyi, Akuwor Dosu, Afwor Dosu, Polo Dosu, Soworlo Dosu, Tímò Femevor Kòsú Afordoanyi, Billy Husunugbo Emmanuel Adukonu, Eyi Sokpor, Mináo Sakpotehí Agbogi, Aní Azamèli, all of Bedzame, Kòkú Asafo, Midae Ahiaku, Daworlo Agbavor Fafa Awudi all of deme Midao Ebu, Kòkú Solaga, Agboradue Kovor, Dawuso Agbavor, Gasper Ametume, Dòdú Mesah, Yao Gonyi, Nani Agbewu, Kòdú Gavor, Yemavi Ahumu, James Gamor, Masa Malohu, Amí Malohu, Tawo Ahuátroga all of Ohawu Kuma Yagbe, Soryamètor Afordoanyi, Soryamètor Gbèli all of Amansu, Yao Adabla Yao Savor, Minsawonu Kòdú all of Wuti, Atsu Dosu, Kòwini Dòdzényi, Dogbey Gata Hutzengor Edra, Edó Zevor, all of Kòfeyame, Kòwini Somenu Daworlo Atike, Danyawor Atike, Midao Dorgio, Kòsú Alenya, Kòdúvì Adopie Dòdú Alenya, Palango Alenya, Mawutor Adopie, all of Alaveme, Midao Adzami, Kòsòkú Kpeglo, Kòkúvì Kporukwe, Abey Femevor, Besa Asafo Daniel Dakpu, Edo Feliu, Prosper Amiesoror, Anthony Dantaku, all of Azpalia, Daworlo Awute, Yao Asafo, Sorewae Atorkpa, Danyu Husunugbo all of Avega, Godfred Agbogi, Afashime Agbogi, Dovi Lóla, Agboghè Lóla, all of Afife Yaoví Hpeka, Dagèdè Try, all of Aborforwè Megbede Danyu Amanyo, Paga Agboka all of Norfori, Ebey Yevuga, Edo Yevuga, Kòkú Atakpa, Agboghè Kporfor, Dashivi Gobodo, all of Ewu Àvègodo, Dawuso Nyatume Nortu Nyatume, C.P.P. Nyatume all of Agome, Kofi Anuettor, Daviga Dorvó CK, Bogbey Afordoanyi, Pata Nyatume, all of Tsiyinu, Dogbey Afordoanyi, Ekú Tsikata, Amivi Kporfor, Huzer Ahuátroga all of Kumase, Bakor Havor, Tògbui Bakor, Hutoada Bakor, Nori Katta, all of Aglémeyu, Agboradua Kivi, Mishida Kivi, all of Kivi, Agbodzi Lawoe, Nuru Laga, Soloshime Dogbetsey, Hufordzi Yevugah all of Kutsimu, Tògbui Agbakpor, Yavol Poku, all of Kivi Poli Agbogi, of Xavi, Mr. Agudzamega, Tsawe Tògbò, Peter Agudzamega Cletus Agudzamega, all of Dzagatze Tògbui Kufu, Tògbui Atsiane, Atsu Dzatzagbo all of Kòkú Awa Vòdzorgbe Xanu Amega all of Agri College William Expo Brother Tsikata Camara, all of Afidenyigba

**All friends & sympathizers are cordially invited**

10. Publicity material of prominent Anlo tradition keeper Edosu's funeral (6<sup>th</sup> August, 2011)

This endorses some of the practices of such Anlo religious groups as well documented by scholars including ethnomusicologist Steven Friedson (2009), who documents the Brekete religious worship of the Anlo-Ewe. According to Anlo traditional scholars dance-drumming is an integral part of community life and an important aid in the pursuit of the collective destiny, perhaps the essence of their shared experience. In this communal activity, it is the duty of every member to participate. According to Ladzekpo (1995), non-participation amounts to self-

exclusion from society as a whole and carries with it severe consequences in the same way that the non-performance of some civic obligations in other cultures of the world brings down punishment. The most severe penalty for non-participation is to be denied a proper burial. Receiving a good burial is extremely important to the Anlo-Ewe. In contrast to other societies of the world that demonstrate the importance of having a good burial by buying funeral insurance from commercial funeral homes, the participation of the Anlo-Ewe in the collective and shared experiences of the community is the only insurance towards receiving a proper burial.



11. One of the great grand daughters of the deceased preparing *akple*. (6<sup>th</sup> August, 2011)

Simply put, to know the history of the Anlo-Ewe is to interrogate their culture through a holistic form called dance, also known as dance-drumming due to its more encompassing nature. While

much emphasis is placed on doing these dances as communal activities in an attempt to transfer Ewe knowledge through oral tradition, it is evident that the dancers in the process consciously or unconsciously serve the anatomical and physiological needs of their dancing bodies. Below is an excerpt from my interview with Dartey Kumodzie, who offered physiological revelations about Ewe dances.

*Dzongbe ga yenye akorsu* (Vibration of sound, rhythm and motion constitutes the birth and control of life). The mystery of birth of life is the creative force called *Tsitsi* or *maniga* (magnetism) and *hese* (power of gravity). Before life is created, it is rhythm that the heart coordinates and anytime this coordination process is disturbed, the human body changes. The sun changes every twelve hours as a result of movement of the earth; and anytime this movement process is disturbed, the weather changes. *Alo yi do vi anyia yee foa vi*. (The principles and the laws upon which you raise a child are the same you teach the child). Our forefathers used these four elements to form various music and dance forms to keep the body stable and healthy. The *tseka* (back bone), the cord of consciousness or the spinal cord comes from the brain through the back of the body with the responsibility of sending energy to the various organs of the body. There are Anlo-Ewe spiritual dances that are used to stimulate psychic centres of the body and to allow spiritual energy to flow over them. Some dances were created to lift the dancer to a higher spiritual level. *Adawu* (heavenly dance), is one of the thirteen *yewe* spiritual dance types that lifts up the spirit of the cult members into the blissful abode of the creator (Kumodzie, 2011).

Kumodzie's view validates the reality of the four elements that constitute Anlo-Ewe life (sound, rhythm, vibration and movement) which I discussed at the beginning of the chapter. It also underscores the importance of dance as part of Anlo-Ewe life. Of course if the people are able to identify dance as the instrument in charge of distributing energy to the various organs of the human body, this shows that what happens in the inside of Anlo-Ewe body as far as dance is concerned is more than what is manifested visually on the outside of the body.

## **2.18. Anlo Traditional Clans and their Functions**

Strict adherence to traditional practices such as customs, rites and institutions becomes a central theme around which Anlo indigenous knowledge revolves. The perpetuation of this unique tradition becomes a collective responsibility of individuals, families and the entire State. As Anlo-Ewe indigenous scholars such as Agbodeka (1997), Amegago (2011), Ameenor (1994) and Kumassah (2009) have documented, every family in Anlo belongs to a special group of identification called *Hlor* (clan). Anthropologist Sandra Greene who did an in-depth study on the Anlo-Ewe wrote: "The clan or hlor is the largest social unit in the Anlo social system and is defined as a group of males and females who observe the same totems and taboos, worship the gods of the particular clans to which they belong and who claim to be the descendants through approximately eight to ten generations of a common putative male ancestor" (Greene, 1981, 451). (See also Nukunya, 1969, 20). In all, there are fifteen clans in Anlo namely, *lafeawo*, *Bateawo*, *Adzoviawo*, *Amladeawo*, *Bameawo*, *Ameawo*, *Likeawo*, *Toviawo*, *Kleviawo*, *Xetsofeawo*, *Agaveawo*, *Tsiameawo*, *Dzeviawo* and *Wifemeawo*. The various clans are responsible for the performance of certain customary rites which are vital to the well being of the members as well as the stability of the traditional State.

Although an in-depth investigation would be needed to fully articulate the roles of these clans in the affairs of the Anlo traditional State, it is necessary to touch on some of these roles as a way of providing insight into the positions the various clans hold in Anloland. For instance, The *Adzoviawo* and the *Bateawo* are the royal clans that provide on alternative basis the *Awoamefia*



(Paramount Chief) of the State<sup>6</sup>. *Lafeawo* are the priestly clan in charge of *tsifodi* (pouring libation) during Anlo State functions such as their annual Hogbetsotso Festival, *Nugbuidodo* (Rite of reconciliation) and *Fiadodo* (Enstoolment of chief). The *Likeawo* have the responsibility of carrying the *Awoamefia* in a palanquin during these festivals. While the *Agaveawo* have the privilege to be installed as *Awadada* (the commander in chief of the Anlo state army), *Toviawo* are in charge of firing the first gun shot during wars and also are responsible for punishing criminals under the Anlo ancient justice system called *Nyikɔfofo*.<sup>7</sup>

## 2.19. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed elements that constitute life in Anlo-Eweland as linked to dance. I have also introduced and discussed the intrinsic elements in Anlo-Ewe culture that require esoteric knowledge for the deeper understanding of their significance. Having discussed how dance is related to different economic activities as well as the entire life of the Anlo-Ewe people, I will proceed with in-depth discussion of the various dance forms in Anlo-Eweland. In relation to Anlo-Ewe dances, *Agbadza* is the mother of all and it forms the foundation of all the 36 communities that constitute what is known as the Anlo State (See appendix A). Out of *Agbadza*, many other dances were created to tell life story of the Anlo- Ewe people. The next chapter provides historical and socio-cultural insight into *Agbadza* dance as a national symbol of the Anlo-Ewe people.

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<sup>6</sup> Paramount chief is the highest authority usually regarded as the king of the traditional State. Two clans-*Bateawo* and *Adzoviawo* alternate in nominating *Adeladza* and *Sri* respectively to be installed as the *Awoamefia* of the State.

<sup>7</sup> Ancient system of execution in Anloga in which criminals were buried alive. (See Fiagbedzi, 1997, 156)

## **Chapter 3: Aesthetics and Structural Elements of Agbadza Dance**

### **3.1. The Pure Life of the Anlo-Ewe**

Dance, when looked at whether as a movement system or a cultural phenomenon has much to say about people. Whatever symbolic message a dance form carries often becomes a subject of interpretation by choreographers, scholars, teachers, writers and audience. The process of interpreting these symbolic messages may be influenced heavily by value judgements as to what the interpreter perceives to be 'good' and 'beautiful'. In other words, the exponent judges these symbolic messages based on what he/she deems appropriate. The fact that culture is dynamic and in constant flux as a response to new developments all over the world does not imply that all cultures are the same or that all cultures are measured by the same process of evaluation. This chapter throws more light on elements to consider when applying Western aesthetics to the critique of African dance forms. The chapter interrogates existing theories about dance aesthetics and offers a perspective on the holistic nature of African arts using Agbadza dance of the Anlo-Ewe as a case study with the aim of establishing the intrinsic elements that go into standard procedures under which the word aesthetics can best be applied to African dance analysis.

### **3.2. The Notion of Aesthetics**

The concept of dance aesthetics can be very complex and misunderstood if not used appropriately or put in the proper context. According to cultural anthropologist Adrienne Kaeppler (2003, 153), the word aesthetics, depending on context can refer to a response, a principle or set of principles or philosophical system. Although the common paradigm in this concept touches on beauty, Kaeppler uses the concept of evaluation rather than beauty as the basic concept of aesthetics. The study of Kaeppler which focuses on the interrelationships

between social structure and the arts fully articulates some issues that resonate with my study as far as application of Western aesthetics to non-Western forms is concerned. She explains:

The capacity of an individual to share an aesthetic experience with culturally different people is even more remote. Visitors frequently delude themselves into believing that they feel the same things as native peoples when viewing an artistic production, but this is based upon a false notion of art as a universal language (Kaeppler 2003, 154).

Having realised the awareness created by Kaeppler's research that the notion of art is problematic if not contextualised, I will discuss briefly the definition of art and its relation to culture. It is very important to note here that a definition of art is, in itself, a controversial issue due to the fact that there are constraints involved in such an endeavour. For example, paintings, entities, artefacts, sculptures and performances are works of people and these people hold some ideas, messages and values behind their creations that can be linked to the culture they share. How can we have a meaningful discussion making distinction between which of these works constitute art and which of them do not without considering the cultures from which these creations emerged? In spite of these constraints, it is still essential to define art in a broad context or at least outline some observable qualities in what must be considered as a piece of art.

Over four decades ago, Kaeppler defined art as "cultural forms that result from creative processes which manipulate movement, sound, or materials" (1971, 175). The term "cultural forms" in this definition becomes the central point around which my discussion revolves. What are cultural forms? What role do they play in identity formation and how are they measured? Cultural forms may include literature (both oral and written), history, music, movements, gestures, symbols and colours. These forms may be seen as a symbol in identity formation of a given society but the most important element required for these forms to attain an art status is the

process of creativity. Creativity is the tool that manipulates these cultural forms to become art. Once a piece of work is labelled an art, it is assumed there are observable qualities in it that must be measured. This is where the issue is more complicated owing to the fact that all arts cannot be measured by the same standard.

American anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1983) made a valid point about the need to 'look past the art and rather at the artist.' Geertz is of the view that analysing a piece of art without finding out the background of the source/producer of the art has the potential to conceal the concept and meaning of that art. By this enlightenment provided by Geertz, it may be obvious that one of the best ways of looking at art is to view it in its own terms and think about our own reactions; and this is likely to reveal the thoughts of the artist which became the concept being expressed in that piece of art. Of course, Geertzian theory of art as a cultural system in which response to aesthetics is both intellectual and emotional emphasises the close relationship between art and culture. Art shows a lot about culture and about the artist. Furthermore, different cultures create different types of arts which have effect on the members of those cultures. Therefore, dance aesthetics cannot be fully discussed without considering all other aspects of the culture from which the dance emerged.

Anthropologist and dance scholar Andrée Grau (2003) looks at dance aesthetics as an important part of a sensitivity that underlies all cultural systems. In her work she adopts Ellen Dissayanake's (1988; 1992) notion of "art" as "making special". She also draws on the experiences of anthropologist and Tiwi expert Jane Goodale in a unique analytical approach which allows her to examine the relationship between activities that are generally considered as

"art". Looking at aesthetics as a truly embodied condition all over the human senses, Grau (2003) engaged with the well known concept of 'Dreaming' as the vital element among the Tiwi and all the Aborigine in Australia that brings the human and natural worlds together. The picture here positions the two realms of existence on parallel lines. While the human world on one line can be considered as the artistic world given the fact that it can be accessed through activities considered as 'art' such as rituals, dancing and singing, the other line carries past and present beyond the natural world. Grau's work does not only draw a distinction between the two worlds in terms of their attributes but also it lays bare the difference between activities that are considered as arts and those that are not. What is more relevant to my study is Grau's notion of the study of aesthetics as "ways of entry into different conceptualisations, different ways of making sense of the world (2003, 173); and this helps me to discuss not only what constitutes Anlo-Ewe aesthetics but also how this African/Ghanaian group makes sense of the world.

### **3.3. Introducing the African and Ewe Aesthetics**

Looking at African aesthetics, dance scholar Kariamu Welsh Asante (1998) advanced the ideas of 'beauty' and 'good' drawing largely on art historian Susan Vogel's (1986) notion of aesthetics as fundamentally moral. She explains:

Vogel correctly points out the symbiotic connection between 'beauty' and 'good' that is so prevalent in African societies. This fusion of beauty and good does not denote a lack of distinction between the two. It is instead an indication of perennial multiplicity of concepts that occupy equal status and dominance (Welsh Asante 1998, 203).

In as much as the concept of beauty and good are prevalent in African aesthetics, it is very important to be aware of how these ideas are conceptualised in the various African cultures. The factors that influence the process of achieving an objective view of art such as socio-political,

anthropological and moral considerations must be given room in this objective but critical judgement of art. More specifically, within the Anlo-Ewe, consideration must be given to the understanding and appreciation of the underlying principles and mechanisms that govern the whole culture. Amegago (2011) reaffirms that an awareness of African aesthetics requires understanding of African philosophy, world view and culture. He writes:

African aesthetics is shaped by the interwoven biological/physical, social, economic, political, religious and ethical values. In general, the Africans are born within certain environments. They interact with environmental features and creatures by using their senses of feeling, seeing, smelling, hearing, touching and tasting. They also think about the origin of the cosmos and formulate concepts and ideas to communicate among themselves and with their source (Amegago 2011, 220).

Amegago's view suggests that African dance aesthetics must be discussed with the required knowledge and understanding of the various cultural elements that constitute dance in Africa. Dance among the Anlo-Ewe may be defined through two concepts namely, *wu* (dance-drumming) which refers to a collective expression of history and culture through drumming, singing, movements and gestures; and *atsia* (movement style) which includes the dynamics of movement, sound, costume or a particular response from a performer. Based on this definition, Anlo-Ewe aesthetic values are expressed through drum texts, song texts, dance movements, gestures, eye contact, remaining silent, facial expression, elaborate costumes and general organisation of the entire dance-drumming event. Additionally, the participants of Anlo-Ewe dance in displaying these aesthetic qualities must operate within the social ethics in which the entire performance exists. Any violation of these social ethics may negatively affect the evaluative process and may cause displeasure to both the performers and to the elders who have the responsibility of making evaluative comments as to whether the performance is pleasing or not. Repercussions for those who fail to adhere to the social ethics may be very important to note

here. This may include an imposition of a heavy fine usually, an amount of money and bottles of alcoholic drink. In the case I witnessed in Genui, a village near Anloga, those who were found guilty of breaking the ethical principles were made to pay a substantial amount of money and two bottles of *dekele* (locally brewed alcoholic drink) each.

The Anlo-Ewe expression, *ewua dze fiato dze gato* (the performance conforms to the laws and principles of rhythm) is often used to describe a performance that is aesthetically pleasing to the leaders and the performers. Another expression, *ewua gble, ewua mevivi o, ewua mesi atsa o* (the performance is spoilt, bad or unsatisfactory) is used to describe a poor performance or a performance that lacks rhythm and dynamism of the Ewe culture. How do we make distinctions when applying Western aesthetics to African forms? The key to unlock the epistemological door to the understanding of these distinctions lies in a discussion of intrinsic elements that clearly differentiate African art and culture from the Western forms. For example, dance in Britain may be seen as a stage art which is performed to a paying audience whereas a dance in Ghana within traditional settings may be seen as part of life and a shared tradition of the people and does not require a paying audience.

According to dance scholar Sondra Fraleigh (1999), dance, as a human movement and human behavior, can be contextualised as theatre arts. In this form, it comes with theatrical elements such as scenes, costume, space, miming, and has observable elements such as effort, timing, movement and its qualities that can be measured. Anlo-Ewe dances in their traditional context are not regarded and treated as theatre arts. Therefore, it is very interesting to realise that the systems adopted in measuring these observable properties of dance may not be as perfect as they

might appear to be when applied to the Anlo-Ewe forms. It is in this light that any attempt to discuss aesthetics of a dance form from Africa must first interrogate the dance's origin and significance.

I will now proceed to present Agbadza dance as a case study through which there will be further exploration of the Anlo-Ewe aesthetic values to validate my earlier argument that applying aesthetic concepts to African arts and cultures without having regard to African philosophical concepts and guiding principles will only result in complicating the existing problems.

### **3.4. The Origin of Agbadza Dance**

According to African music scholars including Kofi Agawu (1995), Nissio Fiagbedzi (1977), Steven Friedson (2009), and AM Jones (1959), Agbadza is a music culture of the Anlo-Ewe that evolved from the last part of the seventeenth century. Anlo-Ewe tradition keepers with whom I worked in Ghana including Dartey Kumodzie trace the etymology of the name *Agbadza* to a combination of two Ewe words: *agbe* (life) and *dza* (fresh or pure). This therefore means fresh life or pure life. Interviews I conducted with Ewe dancers, composers, master drummers and storytellers suggest that Agbadza came out of an ancient war dance called *Atrikpui*. This is a dance whose movements are purely military gestures that use the handling of such props as sword, gun and horse tail with stamping of feet and cross swinging of arms all of which go with strong contraction and release of the torso. Ethnomusicologist Paschal Younge describes *Atrikpui* as "the musical type of heroes or men of the southern Ewes of Ghana" (Younge, 2011, 61). Many Anlo tradition keepers insist that to understand the meaning and origin of *Atrikpui*, one must consider its primordial song below.



<i>Aklie do gokame</i>	(Akli is in serious trouble
<i>Tuwo di anago</i>	Guns are firing in Yorubaland
<i>Dahume Aklasu woe do gokame</i>	Warriors of Dahome are in trouble
<i>Mieyina Dahume Xoluawo Kpoge</i>	We are going to see the powers of Dahume
<i>Aklie do gokame</i>	Akli is in real trouble
<i>Afogbonuviwo ne wu agbo mia yie</i>	People of Afogbonu, open the gates for us!
<i>Hoedzalele</i>	It is a battle of reality
<i>Mieyina Dahume Xoluawo kpoge.</i>	We are going to see the warriors of Dahume.)

The above lyrics may appear to be partly self-explanatory but insight into the deeper understanding of this song can only be achieved by searching for the historical event that led to its composition. Papavi Hogbedetor Kudzordzie, a retired Ewe cultural educationist who worked with the Ghana Education Service for more than three decades as a cultural officer in charge of music and dance, released an audio cassette (2005) titled 'Eweawo Mikpo Megbe' (Ewes, Look into Your History). In this audio documentation, Kudzordzie reveals that the Ewes on their migration journey from Hogbe<sup>1</sup> were confronted by a warrior group led by Doe Akli at a Nigerian town now known as Gbadagli (Badagri) near the border between Nigeria and Benin. According to Kudzordzie's narrative which draws solely on Ewe oral tradition of historical accounts, this war which took place around the middle part of the sixteenth century was won by the Ewes as their first victory and they celebrated it and later choreographed the whole event into dance which has the song as a retelling of the story with movements depicting how they captured and killed their opponents.

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<sup>1</sup> *Hogbe* is used widely in Anlo-Eweland to refer to the many places the people had lived before finally settling in Anloga. It simply refers to the origin of the Ewe people which includes Ketu in present day Mali, Ile Ife in Nigeria, Dogbonyigbo in Benin and Nortsie in Togo.

My formal interviews with numerous Ewe musicians, dancers and traditional scholars about this song contrary to Kudzordzie's audio material produced different versions of the same story with many distortions and confusions that challenged my own thoughts and entire reasoning leading to the illumination that there are always different versions of history. One central point that runs through all the versions is the meaning of the name *Gbadagli* which happens to be the war venue.

*Gbadagli* when looked at through the lens of *adagana* reveals its extended form as '*Gbadagbawo glife*' (The place soldiers were defeated). Kudzordzie's narrative puts it specifically as *Anago gbadagbawo glife* (The place Yoruba soldiers were defeated). After many days of pondering over this state of confusion, I was invited to discuss dance on a radio station in the Volta Region of Ghana called Volta Star Radio. The presenter of the programme, Kwame Senyo, an Ewe broadcaster complicated the problem by asking the most unexpected question about the origin of Atrikpui dance. Nothing would be more embarrassing than to be a performer of a dance form for over three decades without knowing exactly how the dance came about. As I sat in the studio thinking of which of the many versions of the same narrative to present, *Atrikpui* music was being played with its originating song '*Aklie do gokame*' to the hearing of the anxious listening public. At the end of the day, a critical analysis of the lyrics of the song as well as the dance movements compared to the multiple perspectives gathered earlier began a debate on the military nature of the Anlo-Ewe of which many listeners contributed by phone calls. Contributions from listeners whose sources were linked to the stories of their fore bearers told from generations to the next significantly endorsed Kudzordzie's version of the story with the core point centring on the huge amount of Ewe knowledge, history and inestimable experience that is embedded in oral tradition. No matter how authoritative my secondary sources have

become due to the fact that they are in print, it is important to give priority to primary sources most of which dwell in oral tradition. I am also aware of the critique of reliability and therefore credibility. Referring to oral histories in contrast to written sources, Nigerian Art historian Roland Abiodun asserts, "the use of oral traditions will reveal forgotten meanings that would be difficult or even impossible to obtain even from the cooperative informant" (2001, 16). This underscores how important it is for scholars, practitioners and teachers of this Anlo-Ewe dance to interrogate and give credibility to oral history in order to establish the origin, meaning and significance of *Atrikpui* and all other Ewe/Ghanaian and African dance forms.

*Atrikpui* therefore, evolved as a victory dance to accompany music characterised with heroic chants and songs that tell the story of the historic first ever victory of the Anlo-Ewe in the many wars they fought together as a people on their migration journey to find a dwelling place.

The Anlo-Ewe, after settling in Anloga decided to put their past behind them and forge ahead with a new life and this significantly reformed *Atrikpui* into *Agbadza* which means fresh life or new life. It is important however, to note here that this transformation of *Atrikpui* to *Agbadza* does not wipe out the ancient war/victory performance from Anlo communities. Rather it remains a preserve for only men considered as gallant forces capable of protecting the Anlo State; and its performance is also limited to occasions such as funeral of a departed chief or warrior, enstoolment of a chief and also at cultural festivals.

Many Ewe scholars and tradition keepers often refer to *Atrikpui* as the predecessor of *Agbadza* and other Ewe dances. Ewe sociologist G K Nukunya discussing the role of music and dance in

the Anlo-Ewe Hogbetsotso Festival writes: 'While the ever popular Agbadza is always performed, its ancient predecessor, *Atrikpui* is given a pride of place' (1997, 108). Similarly, Amegago discusses Ewe music and dance and refers to Agbadza as "one of the oldest music and dance forms/styles which is believed to have originated from the old military dance called *Atrikpui*" (Amegago 2011, 102).

### **3.5. Agbadza Movement in Context**

It is a common belief in Anlo that life begins in the spine and this common theme is reflected in Agbadza as the dance also begins in the spine and builds up into what can be described as a contraction and release of the torso. Although the main motion of Agbadza could visually be seen as located at the torso, other body parts play various roles and these roles cannot be left out in any attempt to analyse Agbadza movement style. The role of body parts such as the hands, arms, shoulders, feet, waist, buttocks and the head are very vital in Agbadza dance. This role may be purely semantic or simply a collaborative one. The feet maintain time keeping steps one at a time basically tapping on the regular beat or what is widely known as the pulse. Doris Green in discussing the cultural significance of African dance forms confirms this role of the feet. She writes: "In dances such as Agbadza, Atsiagbekor, Gahu and Kadodo, the feet acting as timekeepers is clearly evident" (1998, 19). The hands are positioned at the sides a little above the waist level with the palms facing the dancing floor. At both sides of the body, the joint between the lower arm and the upper arm is flexed -forming an angle of about ninety degrees directly opposite the elbow and the full arms together with the hands in these right-angular positions, rotate with up and down shoulder movement collaboration as a response to the music according

to the tempo of the pulse. There is also sharp pelvic movement which triggers a strong response from the buttocks and the head gives a great deal of help in facial expression.

The above movement description is limited to what happens outside the dancing body and does not include a picture of how *seselelame* (the various Ewe sensory modalities) work internally as a coordinating force between the music and the dancer. This undoubtedly challenges efforts to document these movements as even Labanotation, the widest used movement notation tool can only pick a partial picture of the above movement description. Laban analysis could do well in capturing the body and its external parts but sadly may not be able to capture the internal feelings that occur in the body during the process of executing Agbadza movement. Also, the Agbadza dancing body carries certain qualities that may not be present in all other dancing bodies. For example the size of the buttocks must be proportional to the body with the waist as the centre. Formation of this body type does not materialise without the concerted efforts of mothers who use warm water, shear butter, towel and other materials to gently press and rub their babies to achieve what is considered the Anlo human figure. Ethnomusicologists who studied the music of Agbadza could not conclude their work without touching on the uniqueness of its movement.

Steven Friedson writes,

What makes this dance beautiful, according to Ewes, is how the back moves, particularly how the shoulder blades come together. This movement is not initiated by the arms as novices try to perform this dance, but the arms move as a result of bringing the shoulder blades together. This is a subtle difference but crucial to the correct feeling and look, for it leaves the arms free and loose (Friedson 2009, 205).

Agbadza was performed at many funerals that I witnessed and in many cases attracted the non Anlo-Ewe who participated fully but one could see a clear difference between the owners of the

dance who share that sense of identity and the visitors who struggle to reach the full realisation of the complete execution of the main movement. More fascinating is the fact that while the visitors could hardly sustain the energy level for a few minutes, the Anlo natives, most of who were born and raised in the traditional setting were able to carry on with the vigorous Agbadza movement for hours. Ewe dance instructor, Godwin Gati explained that "when a dancer employs the technique of coordinating movements appropriately from all the many body parts, no matter how long the performance, there is absolutely no feeling of pain or tiredness" (Gati, 2011). I argue that my research through fieldwork and also the little scholarly opinion on the Anlo-Ewes discovers glaring evidence suggesting that Agbadza dance is simply the affirmation of the word *nlo*, the curled body posture of Amega Whenya representing an entire life process involving exhaustion, protection, conservation, power, performance and transformation.

### **3.6. Agbadza Costumes**

Agbadza has now become a dance of cultural identity that is open to all humankind in Anlo-Eweland regardless of gender, age, economics, social, political and religious orientations. In modern Ghana today, Agbadza dance is a common factor that identifies someone as belonging to Anlo Ewe culture. All the thirty six communities of the Anlo State have their own Agbadza dance groups/clubs that perform during funerals and other social functions such as graduation events, wedding ceremonies, naming ceremonies, birth day celebrations and other life-cycle events. There is the idea of *atsyor* (beauty) which refers to the immaculate and elegant appearance of the dancer and the whole membership of the club in terms of what they wear, carry and display during the performance at the dancing arena. These communities design their own costumes to enhance the message being sent to their audience.

Costumes worn in African performances according to Amegago (2011) "reflect the socio-cultural group, the nature of the performance, the occasion of the performance, performance style, the mood of the performers; and the requirement for dramatic enactment" (2011,185). Colours are very important in relation to the occasion. For example, white fabrics may be used in celebrating birth and child naming ceremonies. The same white is used in celebrating the funeral of a person who died at an age above eighty years. Black and red are generally considered as funeral colours in Anlo-Eweland. While black colour is regarded as an expression of sorrow and grief, red colour is used in performing funeral rites of a person who died in an accident or in a war just as poppies are used in Britain to remember those brave people who died in a war.

Agbadza costume is a specially designed pair of shorts called '*atsaka*' which extends just below the knees. The design uses a combination of traditional hand-woven '*kete*' cloth and plain material. This special pair of shorts which has two pointed edges behind the thighs is worn by folding the excess material to balance neatly around the waist through the use of a strong string which serves as the fastener and slacker of the whole piece. It is a loose type of outfit worn by both sexes which facilitates free movement of the dancer as well as enhances all movements around the hip socket. On top of *atsaka*, the male performers wear a shirt of any light material with huge loin cloth of about two by eight metres wrapped stylishly around the waist (See figure 13). Female performers use two (one by two metre) clothes; one is wrapped from the waist extending to the ankles while the other one is shortened to the knee level which also serves as a belt (See figure 22).

Observing and taking part in Agbadza in various Anlo communities captures some emerging patterns that suggest that dance is the symbol of all Anlo-Ewe cultural practices. This observation underscores how the entire life and culture of the African is deeply rooted in music and dance as observed by prominent scholars including Kofi Agawu (1995, 2007); Modesto Amegago (2011), William Amoaku (1975); Zelma Badu-Young (2002), Francis Bebey (1975); John Blacking (1973); John M Chernoff (1979); Akin Euba (1990); Nisio Fiagbedzi (1977); Kofi Gbolonyo (2009); A M Jones (1959); David Locke (1980) and Kwabena Nketia (1963, 1974). Although not all these scholars researched the Anlo-Ewe, their observations suggest that among many African societies including the Ewe, music/dance becomes the pivot around which indigenous cultural practices revolve. While Locke and Chernoff and Gbolonyo studied the music of the Anlo-Ewe, Amegago and Badu-Young researched both Anlo-Ewe music and dance. Specifically, Badu-Young studied the Adzogbo dance of the Anlo-Ewe, focusing on the dance's relation to the people's communication with each other, social structure, creativity, spirituality, courtship, philosophical view, intellectual development and general communal epistemology. Drawing partly on these earlier works especially, Gbolonyo (2009) whose study uses Ewe song texts to articulate the significant knowledge embedded in Ewe culture, my current work focuses on dance and its dynamic role in the transmission of Ewe indigenous knowledge and values. In addition to being a repository of knowledge, dance embodies values and unique artistic traditions through which musicians and dancers document preserve and transmit indigenous knowledge and re-enact the historical, political and socio-cultural structure of the Anlo-Ewe.



### 3.7. Hierarchy of Agbadza Dance Members

The degree of participation in dance by each individual in these Anlo-Ewe communities, however, varies and reflects a hierarchy of relative importance among the performers. I have tried to capture these degrees of involvement in the pyramidal model in Figure 12 below. This model has Chiefs and elders at the apex representing supreme leadership of the community. Chiefs and elders are considered to be the back bone of the dance club but they do not participate in the act of dancing except on very special occasions where they will be required to dance for a few seconds. During this short period, the whole membership will be on their knees and sing appellation to appreciate the performance of their supreme leaders. Under this leadership are the male elders called *wumegawo* (The Dance Lords) and the female elders are called *wudadawo* (The Dance Mothers). Their principal role is to provide a source of authority and advice, ensuring an orderly and systematic performance according to the shared traditions of the community and the entire Traditional State.

The second level of the hierarchy is held by two master musicians: The song composer *henorga* (master song composer) who is responsible for the creation of the distinct texture that forms the characteristic dance-drumming style; and the lead drummer *azagunɔga* (master drummer) another master musician, who controls the whole orchestration by engaging in many dialogues with other supporting drummers in a drum language conversation that guides the entire ensemble in performing the various shared traditions of good dance-drumming. The term choreography was not known to Anlo-Ewe culture until 1962 during the formation of the Ghana Dance Ensemble. Therefore, the role of a choreographer in the past was a collective responsibility of the master composer and the master drummer under the supervision of the elders. Creation of new

works was led by the two master musicians who gradually worked to secure full participation by the whole group and in the end; the entire membership shares the credit. The next level of the hierarchy includes: (a) *Tonuglawo* (ring-leaders), consisting of some more experienced participants with leadership potentials, who inspire and exhort the performers along the performance arena and provide them with examples for them to emulate. (b) *Haxelawo* (supporting song leaders), who assist the composer in leading and directing the singing. (c) *Wuvifolawo*, the supporting drummers who assist the lead drummer in the performance of various musical guidelines. They include musicians who play the *gakogui* (bell), *Axatse* (shakers) and *akpe* (clappers).

The fifth level of the hierarchy is occupied by *Kadawo*, (the whips of the musical community) who enforce discipline and secure the attendance of the community members at every performance. The rest of the ensemble occupies the lowest level of the hierarchy. Their main roles are to sing, dance, and at times accompany the entire music by singing the rhythms introduced by the drummers. Badu-Younger's study acknowledges this hierarchy and states, "At a first glance, one might conclude that within the ceremony structure there is a hierarchy. The Chief is at the top, the observers at the bottom and the drummers, dancers and singers in the middle" (Badu-Younger 2003, 35). This is in sharp contrast with the view of tradition keepers who maintained that during community performances, everybody participates and that there are no spectators. They maintained that even the members at the lowest level are closely observed and based on their performances, they are encouraged to develop their potential and eventually rising through the ranks to leadership positions. Torgbui Awusu III, a divisional chief of Afife in the Volta Region of Ghana explained that "Any hardworking member can make it to the top but to become a chief, one must first belong to the royal family and also, for a member of the royal

family to be selected and installed a chief one must demonstrate a sound knowledge of Anlo-Ewe cultural values deeply rooted in their dances” (Awusu III, Sept. 2011). Figure 12 below shows the hierarchical structure of the Agbadza dance members in Anlo-Ewe communities.



12: Hierarchical model of members in an Agbadza dance group.

### 3.8. Importance of Ancestral Participation in Dance Performance

According to Anlo-Ewe tradition keepers, traditional dance performance does not happen without inviting their ancestors to spiritually participate with them. It is a collective belief that the ancestors most of whom were the custodians who passed on the tradition to their younger

generations, still live in *Awlime* (land of the dead) and oversee everything that goes on in the life of the people in *Kodzogbe* (the living world). With this in mind, performance of traditional rites including music and dance events requires asking permission from ancestors; and this is done through pouring libation. The extra ordinary Agbadza performance I witnessed in Anyako during their traditional dance festival in the Easter festivities of 2011 endorses this perception.

The warm sunny afternoon performance began with a massive procession whose front area consisted of about one hundred and sixty women in three straight lines, each of them holding a pair of wooden clappers used in accompanying their songs. Next to the women were about eighty men, also in three straight lines, with each of them holding *Axatse* (rattle), with which they were able to hold a defined and constant rhythm to accompany their songs. In addition, they all moved together at the same time with the correct gesture and the right movement as choreographed by the master choreographer.

Drum-carriers lined up horizontally behind the men with their drums well positioned on their heads throughout the whole procession, which lasted for two hours. Anlo tradition keepers revealed that as a usual practice, potential drummers who failed to pick up the simple drum texts that were taught at the rehearsal sessions are made to carry the drums. The main belief behind this practice as explained by master musicians is that, as they carry the drums which are being played by the qualified drummers, the rhythms produced will perhaps enter them and make them perform better next time. Although this is not an expectation that all Ewes should be able to play drums through carrying of drums, this practice has produced a significant number of qualified

drummers in Anlo-Eweland. It was also clear that those who were made to carry drums often get fed up with the heavy load hence they spend extra time working hard to become qualified musicians in order to avoid being used as drum carriers.

The long procession which saw every member sweating profusely finally arrived at the community centre, the venue for the main performance which was an open area with big trees. Chiefs, elders and other invited guests who had waited patiently began to clap for them. Traditional prayers were said through libation in which ancestral spirits were invoked to lead the performance. Half way through the performance there was a slight change of weather, lowering the temperature considerably. Some members spoke about the sudden change and attributed the cloudy weather to their understanding that the performers were sweating and therefore God (through their ancestors) had sent that weather to cool them down. Soon the wind increased in speed throwing dust into their eyes and they began to face cyclones in the dancing arena. Cyclones, as traditional scholars explained, are considered to be ancestral spirits in this part of the world. The performance continued enjoyably in these 'chaotic' conditions as there was a general belief that the ancestors were there to indicate their acceptance of the performance.

In a few minutes the situation changed to drops of water which gradually generated a heavy downpour. One would have expected them to stop the show and look for shelter, but, incredibly, the whole village defied the rain and remained there until it was all over. At the end of it all the general understanding was that God had accepted their performance and blessed them with rain.

While the above scenario may demonstrate that Ewe life cannot be separated from dance, it is more glaring that ancestorship and ancestral worship dominates the spiritual life of the Anlo-Ewe, as GK Nukunya summarises it below:

There is a great belief in the efficacy and power of the ancestral spirits in the lives of their living descendants and the doctrine of reincarnation, whereby some ancestors are reborn into their earthly kin-groups, is also given credence. The dead are believed to live somewhere in the world of spirits, Tsiefe, from where they watch their living descendants in the earthly world, Kodzogbe. They are believed to possess supernatural powers of one sort or another coupled with a kindly interest in their descendants as well as the ability to do harm if the latter neglect them (1969, 27).



13. Agbadza dancers at Anyako- 19/08/2011

### 3.9. Types of Agbadza Dance

There is the slow Agbadza and the fast Agbadza. Because the slow Agbadza is relaxed in timing, the older people find it more comfortable to do. The slow Agbadza gives the dancer enough time to coordinate movements from the various body parts including the hands, arms, shoulders, head,

the pelvic region, legs and feet in a rhythmic move that corresponds to the strong contraction and release of the torso.

The fast Agbadza is mostly enjoyed by the youth. They have the energy and vitality to do it. Sometimes two dancers challenge each other in the field of Agbadza dance. For instance, the two dancers keep doing this vigorous torso movement continuously until one of them bows out making the other the winner. Sometimes the winner faces a fresh challenge from a dancer who feels that the dancer 'A' who is the winner does not deserve to win. There, they continue until one of them bows out for a winner to emerge. These spontaneous competitions have their winning criteria centred on energy, vitality, endurance, strength and above all the Agbadza movement clarity. Interestingly, there are no judges involved. However, the entire membership as well as any other onlookers who might be considered in other cultures as audience assumes the role of judges. The judges may decide to convey their evaluations and comments to the public immediately or at a later performance but this is done by employing other traditional media such as song or drum language rather than ordinary words.

These competitions usually occur during occasions like funerals, especially wake-keepings where Agbadza is played continuously overnight. Significantly, dance is a spontaneous emanation of the life of the Anlo-Ewe; and with this as a guiding principle, these dance clubs are expected to operate as non profit making groups. This means that they do not charge money for their performances. They rather see it as a communal activity involving every member of the community including the person who requests for the performance. However, as a sign of respect for the leaders and the entire drumming club, the one who requests for the performance must perform a short ceremony called '*dzadodo*' which involves donation of a few bottles of locally

brewed alcoholic drink called '*Akpetetsi*' or '*Sodabi*' or '*dekele*' to the club through *henorga* and *azagunorga*, the master song composer and the master drummer respectively. These donation ceremonies which serve as a confirmation of the performance are received by the leaders with happiness and joy that gradually builds up and ostensibly puts the leaders as well as the entire club in a performance mood. During my fieldwork in Ghana, I witnessed one of such donation ceremonies in which Henorga in a unique move to accept the donation raised the song below;

<i>Nane le Atukpame de</i>	(There is something in a bottle
<i>Sohor lem loo.</i>	The Heavenly spirit of performance has arrested me
<i>Sodabi le atukpa me de</i>	Sodabi is the occupant of the bottle
<i>So hor lem loo.</i>	The Heavenly spirit of performance has honoured me
<i>Makpetsi ne tago</i>	Let me take a sip of it
<i>Tago nawo veleleve</i>	To put me in the right mood
<i>Ne mafo Agbadza</i>	For doing Agbadza
<i>Nane le Atukpame de</i>	There is something in a bottle
<i>Sohor lem loo.</i>	The Heavenly spirit of performance has captured me
<i>Sodabi le atukpa me de</i>	Sodabi is the occupant of the bottle
<i>So hor lem loo.</i>	The Heavenly spirit of performance has captured me)

Some Ewe musicians particularly song composers and drummers are noted for their employment of locally brewed alcoholic drink called *sodabi* also known as *akpetetsi* or *dekele* as a catalyst for performance. In this short ceremony, one bottle of the donated drinks would be opened and shared among those present starting with the one who donated them. The tradition of sharing alcoholic drink has been with this group long before their migration from Nortsie and this could be attributed to the offering of drink sacrifices to their ancestors and deities that were believed to be the protectors of the land and the people. Many Ewe musicians with whom I worked in Ghana explained that excessive alcohol intake is one of the unacceptable behaviour patterns in Anlo



land through which people easily lose their life, not necessarily through overdose but through an evil act of poisoning. All performers who participate in this group drinking are constantly reminded to be aware of this and behave accordingly. Ethnomusicologist, James Burns states: "Ewes have an obsessive fear of being poisoned particularly through the potent local alcohol *dekele*. When offering *dekele* in Anlo-Eweland the server will first drink some of it to prove they have not poisoned it" (Burns 2009, 22).

In another funeral performance there was a stylised Agbadza movement with the variation concentrated on the movement of the feet. The dancers moved their feet in a humorous style that sees them sounding *dzavudzavu*. I also noticed in the same performance that this unique change began immediately the following song was raised by *henorga*:

<i>Tɔkɔtsi gbogbo,</i>	Escaping through the looping lagoon
<i>De wo tsom dzavudzavu</i>	Leaves the sound "dzavu dzavu"
<i>Leli ade di de,</i>	There comes a terrible noise,
<i>Minye afe nawo</i>	Seeking help from the wise.
<i>Avu kple hawoe yi fifi ge le Seva</i>	Dogs and pigs on robbery operation at Seva
<i>Sevatorwo nyawo de nu</i>	A powerful chase by the people of Seva,
<i>Torkortsi gbogbo,</i>	Escaping through the looping lagoon
<i>Dewo tsom dzavudzavu</i>	Leaves the sound 'dzavu dzavu').

This interesting song according to Anlo musicians reveals a robbery incident that happened many years ago in Seva, a small fishing community surrounded by the Keta lagoon. Oral tradition has it that some lazy people (dogs and pigs) went on operation to rob the people of the island. In the process, an alarm was raised. The thieves had no other choice of escape but to run through the water which made them suffer and some of them drowned. The roles of dogs and

pigs in Anlo culture are considered as eating without working and as such, members of society who exhibit any sign of laziness are labelled dogs and pigs with this belief that they eat a lot of food but are not hardworking enough to help the society.

Although this song may be deemed a documentation of history, what is more fascinating is the spontaneous nature of the whole performance especially the way song and drum language collaborated together in regulating body movements. It also underscores the significant role and position of drum text as a special language in the entire life process of the Anlo-Ewe as a people.

The controllers of this special language are the drummers who are regarded as very important players whose immediate needs including provision of alcoholic drinks must be met without delay if the group wanted to ensure a successful performance.

### **3.10. Agbadza Musical Ensemble**

The relationship between music and dance in West Africa is so close that one cannot be separated from the other. The marriage between Agbadza music and its dance is so strong that the Ewe word, *wu* which means dance also refers to music. This also signifies that all Anlo-Ewe dances have their own music types that must move together with them; and therefore, one can confidently say without Agbadza music there is no Agbadza dance. Let us now examine elements that constitute Agbadza music. First, there is the instrumental ensemble called *Agbadzawu* (Agbadza Set) which consists of *Gakogui* (double bell), *Axatse* (Rattle), *Kagan* (the first supporting drum), *Kidi or ashiwui or kpetsi* (the second supporting drum), *Sogo* (Another supporting drum as well as a master drum. Sometimes, there are two sogos) and *Atimevu* (The

overall master drum). Second, we must look at *agbadzawugbe* (Agbadza drum text or agbadza drum language) and finally we must discuss the role of *Agbadza hawo* (Agbadza songs) in the entire musical ensemble. I will now proceed with description and playing technique of Agbadza musical instruments.



14. Agbadza Ensemble: *Atimewu, sogo, kidi, kangan, gankogui, axatse and toke.*

### **3.11. Gankogui:**

The first instrument to think about in Agbadza ensemble is Gankogui, a vibrating iron double bell manufactured by blacksmiths. Many Ewe musicians including C.K. Ladzekpo referred to it as *gakpevi* (the forged iron carrying a child) due to its structure consisting of a larger low pitch forged iron and a smaller high pitch one permanently stacked together. The larger forged iron bell is considered as the mother and smaller high pitch one is considered the child in the

protective bosom of the parent. Therefore, Gakogui which means a controller of rhythms also signifies the usual practice of African mothers carrying their baby at the back as opposed to the usual practice of pushing buggies in Britain.

Gakogui constitutes the basic foundation of the entire ensemble upon which all other instruments must run smoothly in a harmonious style. It also provides two different tones revealing the tonal nature of Ewe language. It is played with a stick technique while held in one hand of the performer who sits on a bench with a firm relaxed body. The stick, held by the stronger hand is swung as the hands go into motion supported from the elbows. The actual swing of the hand is done from the wrist. The stick is struck on the full rounded portion of the bell to achieve the best resonance. The standard Agbadza bell pattern sounds, *Tom, kan- kaka, nkankanka-tom, a* vocalisation with eight syllables sounding in verbal term as *Agoo mayi makpo tefe mava*. (Allow me to go and witness it.)



15. Gakogui

### 3.12. Axatse

*Axatse* is a vibrating gourd hollowed out by removing the seeds, and covered with a network of beads or seeds. The sound of *Axatse* is produced by striking it lightly on the thigh and the palm. When struck to rebound off the thigh a dry rattling sound is produced and described in the vocal syllable as "Pa". Struck in a clap-like manner by the palm produces a rattling sound combined with a tonal component from the vibration of the air inside the gourd sounding "Ti" in vocal syllable. The vocalisation of *Axatse* pattern in Agbadza is, ***Pa- Pati Papa, Tipa Tipa Ti Papa***

and this is verbalised as *Tsa mayi makpo tefe mava* (Let me go hurriedly, and witness it.) Obviously the bell and rattles are witnesses to all the rhythms or messages played by the drums.



16. Axatse

### 3.13. *Kagan*

*Kagan* is the smallest drum among the indigenous instrumental resources of the Anlo-Ewe. It is a cylindrical drum of about twenty inches tall with a drum head of about six inches in diameter, an expansion in the middle section of about eight inches in diameter and an opening of about six



inches in diameter at the bottom to let the vibrations out. Kagan is held diagonally between the legs of the drummer seated on a bench for a convenient playing angle. A technique of slapping the membrane with slightly flexible sticks is the most appropriate but most importantly, the sticks must lie flat across the membrane. Kagan with the highest pitch therefore serves as the first supporting drum and keeps the same rhythm throughout the whole music without changing.



*17. Kagan*

### **3.14. Kidi**

The second supporting drum, *Kidi* is designed in a similar but bigger shape and produces slightly lower pitch than Kagan. It is roughly about twenty-three inches tall with a drum head of about

eight inches in diameter and expansion in the middle section of about fourteen inches in diameter. Its playing technique requires the end of the sticks in contact with exactly the centre of the membrane forming an angle of about forty-five degrees between the stick and the membrane.



18. *Kidi*

### 3.15. Sogo

The next to Kidi is *Sogo* which plays a dual traditional role as lead drum in some musical structures and a supporting drum in others depending on the particular ensemble. It is roughly about twenty-six inches tall with a drum head of about nine inches in diameter and an expansion in the middle section of about fifteen inches in diameter. The name *Sogo* was derived from a



description of the shape of the drum that looks somewhat similar to the shape of a large gourd calabash commonly used in sacrificial offerings to 'So', an *Ewe* divinity associated with thunder. In performance, the player sits on a bench with a firm relaxed body as the hands go into motion supported in position from the elbows while the actual swing of the hand is done from the wrist.



19. *Sogo*

### 3.16. Atsimewu

*Atsimewu* is the largest and tallest drum among the instrumental resource of Agbadza. It has a cylindrical body of about five feet tall with an expansion in the middle section of about fifteen inches in diameter and a drum head of about nine inches in diameter. The drum head or

membrane is usually made out of a skin of a deer or antelope. The cylindrical body has an opening of about eight inches in diameter at the bottom to let the vibrations out. The name *Atsimewu* was derived from the description of the manner in which the drum is tilted in a convenient playing position by the help of a functional stand called *wudetsi*.



20. *Atimewu*



*21. Agbadza drummers at Genui (master sogo drummer in white)*



*22. Agbadza dancers respond to the music*

### 3.17. Wugbe:

The term *wugbe*- *wu* (drum) and *gbe* (sound) literally means drum sound. It refers to sounds produced by drums as special language. It is also known as drum text. There are different drum languages that operate in Anlo-Eweland but in the context of this chapter, the discussion will focus on *agbadzawugbe* (Agbadza drum language), its relevance in the performance of Agbadza dance as well as its position in the entire Anloland. It is important to note here that only the drums and percussive instruments discussed above are designated to produce/speak Agbadza language. They are made and tuned in a special way to engage in dialogue of call and response rhythms of Agbadza.

The rhythms they play are at times simple and at times complex but the significance of such rhythms is the most important thing. Sometimes the singers vocalise the rhythms as the drummers play them. The master drummer is the key player. He introduces the rhythm and *kidi*, the second supporting drum, responds to it immediately. The support drummer, especially the *kidi* drummer, is also considered as a very good player. This player must be able to respond to all rhythms introduced by the master drummer.

The master drummer can introduce the rhythm on *atimewu* or on *sogo*. In the traditional Anlo-Ewe setting, there are two master drummers at the same time: one on *atimewu* and the other on *sogo*. The two master drummers work in antagonistic pairs: when one is playing, the other relaxes.

The following rhythm was captured during Agbadza performance at a funeral in Anloga:

Atimewu: *Awlimewue yi Awlimewue yi* (This is the dance for the dead)

Kidi: *Woyi kedege nku ne* (They are covering his eyes with sand).

Anloga is a sandy area where digging of graves does not need heavy machinery but a simple shovel and it is the same tool that is used in covering the tomb which is often seen as throwing sand into the eyes of the dead person. The Anlo-Ewe when doing Agbadza during funerals believe they are performing for the dead person. They also believe that the dead person enjoys the dance in *Awlime* (the land of the dead).

During an annual festival in Whuti called *Tɔtrɔyeye Za* (New Development Festival)<sup>2</sup> the following drum text dominated the Agbadza performance.

Atimewu: *Nadzedzi gbla, nadzedzi gbla* (To fall in love and die in love)

Kidi: *Kolo gbogbo dewo doafe ne ame* (Loving too many women leads to bankruptcy)

Here, the master drum describes the fashion of womanising which according to tradition keepers was very prevalent in Anlo land during the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some men spoke about their immediate family as consisting of four wives and as many as thirty-six children. Long before the advent of Christianity the system of polygyny among the Anlo-Ewe was considered as a fashionable way of increasing family size. Kidi, the supporting drum says 'womanising is an invitation to poverty.' It is wonderful that drums speak not merely words but also they speak

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<sup>2</sup> A community festival organised and sponsored by the youths of Whuti. It is an annual festival through which the youths including those who live in urban centres return home to contribute financially towards the development of their hometown.



wisdom to the people. The Anlo-Ewe consider dance as one of the best ways to educate men about womanising, which has the potential of bringing about polygyny leading to poverty and death. The question of whether or not polygamy is legal could not receive a straight answer from Anlo tradition keepers. Instead, it is considered as a cultural practice which cannot be stopped by legislation. However, Western cultures including Christianity appear to be leading the crusade against polygamy through the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by use of music dance and the related arts and these characterised this local festival. Performing in a festival context where the theme of the celebration is impressively expressed in dance as captured in the drum language above is an integral part of Ewe musical culture and can be counted as one of the best legacies left by their ancestors.

The drum language below describes the Agbadza dancing body.

*Ze kpe do da* (Shoot your buttocks backwards)

*Bobo vide.* (Bend slightly)

Leaning forward with the buttocks shot backwards and slightly bent knees constitute the perfect posture of agbadza dancer. Not only does the above rhythm emphasise the correct posture of the Agbadza dance but also it stresses the correct level. In Agbadza dance, the body is expected to be in a low position to provide the dancer the flexibility to explore the dynamics of the movement without feeling pains. In fact, my experience of dancing Agbadza for over three decades suggests that wrong positioning of the body may cause serious pain after the dance.

It is also fascinating how dance is used to educate the Anlo-Ewe youth about how to work hard and become financially independent. The following drum language has it all.

*Gbe asi nagbe agble* (No farming and no trading)

*Agodui vuvu nado klayi* (Torn and unwanted clothes will be your property)

This simply means a lazy person does not enjoy the luxuries of the world. The key elements to pick from this drum text are: *Asi* (Trading), *Agble* (Farming) and *Agoduivuvu* (Used clothes that are torn into pieces). The main theme of this drum language is centred on Agriculture, the occupation of the Anlo-Ewe in those days under which people who failed to cultivate and sell crops were most likely to live in poverty often relying on used items from other hardworking members. The Ewes today have more choices including civil and public services in addition to the already exhausted field of Agriculture.

### **3.18. *Agbadzahawo* (Agbadza songs)**

Song text is an integral part of Anlo-Ewe music and this is led by specially ordained musicians known as *henowo* (song leaders) who receive their inspiration from *hesu* (a creative energy that generates music). Agbadza songs educate the members as well as the whole community about the need to stick to social ethics and join hands together in a collective effort to build a better and safer community.

Some of their songs address social issues in the communities. For example, during Agbadza performance at a local festival in Anloga, the following song pulled the crowd into the arena where various stylised movements were employed to reaffirm the lyrics.

<i>Mebe made suku</i>	(I decided to go to school
<i>Manya agbale viade</i>	To learn and be knowledgeable
<i>Teacher do fum de</i>	Teacher impregnated me
<i>Danye made fua</i>	My mother, I will abort it.)

This is an early 20<sup>th</sup> century song telling a sad story of a young woman who had a vision of pursuing education to the highest level. All of a sudden her teacher (through an immoral/evil act of rape) impregnated her. Because of the vision she has, she threatens to abort the foetus to enable her fulfil her dream. One of the questions that comes to mind is whether or not Anlo society has any space to tolerate this sexual abuse especially when one considers the philosophy of the traditional state mentioned earlier in chapter 2. Although Anlo tradition keepers were not able to establish whether the teacher in question was a native or a foreigner, they made it emphatically clear that Anlo principles frown on such social vices and therefore the culprit would have been severely punished if not put to death. Now, this song points to teachers who engage in such promiscuous activities to the extent of making their own students pregnant resulting in a high level of female school dropouts.

This study also gathered from the Ewe tradition keepers that those who were found guilty of crimes such as that expressed in the song above would be sent to a secret location in Anloga called "Torkor Atorlia" (The Fifth Landing Shore) to face the ancient justice system I discussed in the previous chapter. Demonstrating the power of dance in the documentation of Anlo-Ewe history, the *Aguda* Dance Club of Anloga performed *wulorlor* (a precession dance) with the song below which talks about events that led to the abolishment of the execution practice at "Torkor Atorlia":



<i>Vidada mefoa vi o</i>	(A mother does not beat a child
<i>Aleke nenye vidada gafo vife dorme</i>	Why should a mother deny her child food
<i>Hooo, Aguda de hoo nami</i>	Hoo, Aguda yells at you
<i>Hooo, Aguda de hoo nami</i>	Hoo, Aguda yells at you
<i>Miator Agudaviawo</i>	Fellow Aguda members
<i>Anloga dua ganye toxor du name</i>	Anloga has been our motherland
<i>Mikata miele eme nyuie</i>	We all reside in it very well
<i>Bugatorwo va gbe du la</i>	Germans invaded our land in the 2 <sup>nd</sup> world war
<i>Wo togbor tso nyikorwua</i>	They went on and took our execution drum
<i>Wotso wula va dade Keta</i>	They sent the drum to Keta
<i>Afimaie vorvor do du la</i>	The nation became lawless with fear
<i>Agbodaze meda nyi o hee</i>	Ram cooking pot does not cook a cow
<i>Tornyewo le duagbagee</i>	People are bent on destroying the nation.)

In an interview with Anlo-Ewe *nunyamorfialawo* including Dartey Kumordzie about the above 20<sup>th</sup> century song, it was explained that Germans invaded Anlo-Eweland during the First World War (1914-1918) and took the *nyikorwu* (execution drum) away which significantly marked the end of the practice. Contemporary Anlo-Ewe society today is full of open arbitrations as well as traditional courts that adjudicate cases and make recommendations, as well as handover such criminals to the law enforcement agencies of the state, who then arraign them before the law courts. Based on the courts' decision, these criminals may pay a heavy fine or face a tougher jail sentence or both.

Questions on the fairness of justice system in Anlo led this study to another discovery of how kinaesthesia is employed as a tool of achieving a sense of balance which represents the neutrality of adjudicators in cases involving members of the community. This is particularly visible in the

climax of Agbadza dance. The dancer in the climax swings the body led by both arms to each side and return to the centre with a popular gesture which sees the body, hands and head in a forward low position signifying the end of the phrase. According to Ewe traditional scholars, Agbadza dance is not complete if the dancer fails to execute the climax movement. Chiefs and elders stressed the point that anyone who does Agbadza without properly finishing it with the standard climax movement is regarded as not knowing the dance and as such must not be counted as a native of Anlo.

### **3.19. Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have discussed the aesthetic and moral values of the Anlo-Ewe as embodied in dance. I have also discussed the origin and significance of Agbadza dance with its structural elements well articulated. While the dance still remains the most impressive tool for communication and education for the Anlo-Ewe (both those in the local professions and those in government employment), it is very interesting to note here that there is absolute absence of any notion of dance as a profession in Anlo-Eweland.

## **Chapter 4: Dance as a Vital Part of Anlo-Ewe Traditional Media**

### **4.1. Anlo-Ewe Dance, a Tool for Communication**

In Ewe societies dance has proven to be one of the most impressive tools for effective communication for many generations and this observation extends beyond Anlo-Eweland as documented by scholars including Ajayi (1996), Amegago (2011), Burns (2009), Chernoff (1979), Nketia (1974), Opoku (1965) and Welsh-Asante (1998). These scholars in their divergent views have discussed the various ways in which dance becomes an important tool for communication in various parts of Africa. This chapter discusses the artistic collaboration between the body and music in a holistic form called dance as a cultural heritage of the Anlo-Ewe. The chapter provides a comprehensive discussion of vital elements including movement, sound, visual forms and multisensory modalities, focusing on the significant role this system plays among the Anlo-Ewe.

Looking at dance as a vehicle of conveying messages in West African societies, I would like to start with the view offered by Green (1998), who has spent a significant amount of time researching into the music and dance traditions of Africa. Green views African dance as "a source of communication through which it is possible to demonstrate emotion, sentiment, beliefs and other reactions through movement" (Green, 1998, 13). Although, in general terms, effective communication demands different media suitable for transferring information to various communities all over the world, considering this view in contrast to those offered by scholars such as Nketia (1974), Welsh-Asante (1998) and Ajayi (1998) suggests that it is not only the message to be communicated that is important, but also the right choice of the medium for

communicating it at the appropriate time to the audience that one has in mind. I will now focus my discussion on elements of Anlo-Ewe media and their various uses in the process of communication.

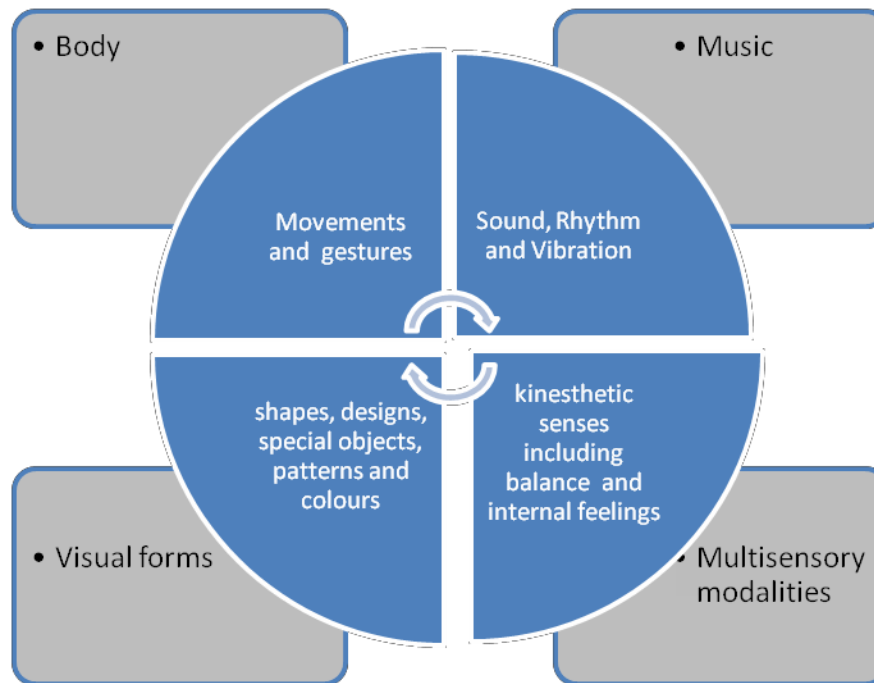
#### **4.2. Elements of Anlo-Ewe Media**

Anlo-Ewe traditional media make use of a number of simple elements, all of which are structured in ways that enable them to be employed for conveying specific impressions or messages by association or by reference to verbal texts. These include the four elements that constitute life in Anlo-Eweland- sound, rhythm, vibration and movement; extending to visual forms including shapes expressed in design and material objects. While sound and rhythm produce text bound media, visual forms collaborate with movement to produce action oriented media.

Mawere Opoku, a Ghanaian dancer, choreographer and scholar explored the expressive nature of dance in African communities and linked this unique mode of expression to internal organs including the heart. Opoku demonstrated realistically how movements and gestures symbolise African daily activities as a special language called dance often employed in celebrating life cycle events (Opoku 1965, 19). Opoku's thoughts might not accurately provide a global definition of dance but it is evident that other dance forms are used in celebrating life cycle events (from birth through life stages to transition) all of which are exhibited according to the context in which the dance form is presented. Janet Adshead captures this in her book, 'The Study of Dance.' She writes:

While some fundamental features may link one form of dance with another, the form which a dance takes and its function in a given society vary with the context in which it occurs. Perhaps the oldest of this context is that of ritual and religion where dance is associated with rites of birth, initiation into adulthood, marriage and death as well as with ceremonies in praise of gods and in propitiation of forces beyond man's conscious control (Adshead 1981, 9).

The important point deriving from the above illustration suggests that dance and life in African societies are inseparable. Green (1998) endorses this claim drawing on the study of Keita Fodeba. She writes: "According to Keita Fodeba, African dance unlike other dance forms is not detached from the lives of the people, but is a spontaneous emanation of the people" (Green, 1998, 13). Having demonstrated the close relationship between dance and life of the Anlo-Ewe, I will now proceed to discuss the vital elements that constitute this holistic form and how these vital elements collaborate in the communication process in the life of the Anlo-Ewe. The diagram below shows how the four elements of Anlo-Ewe media collaborate in a performance process, to produce an end product called dance; and the dynamics involved in using the end product as a tool in communication.



23. Afrodance metrix: The four elements that constitute dance in Anlo-Eweland. (Designed by the researcher)

### 4.3. *Gbe* (Sound)

The term *gbe* (sound) is very important in Ewe communication and for this chapter, I will explore three aspects of this element namely, *Nyagbe* (verbal utterance), *Hagbe* (song text) and *Wugbe* (drum text). In this endeavour, I also refer to the element of vibration as a dynamic force often employed by both text-bound and action oriented media depending on the type of message to be sent and the specific recipient.

### 4.4. *Nyagbe* (Verbal Utterance)

According to Fiagbedzi (1997), *nyagbe* may be defined as “a speech utterance, expressing a complete thought and may equally refer to the rise and fall of speech tones of Ewe” (Fiagbedzi,

1997, 154). Although the organisation and use of this medium may be approached from a purely functional or pragmatic point of view, this may be influenced by artistic considerations. For instance, *nyagbe* may be used not only for transmitting speech utterances, but also may be organised as a vehicle for verbal art or oral literature. Fiagbedzi also observed musically that, while *nyagbe* guides the composer in delimiting melodic phrases, it also serves as the basic framework for shaping melody that preserves meaning at the same time.

Anlo-Ewe *nyagbe* operates in many forms. These include *adetrornyawo* (tongue twisters), *ahanonkorwo* (poetic names), *lododowo* (proverbs), *adzowo* (riddles), *nutinyawo* (narratives), *gliwo* (folk tales), *alobalowo* (dilemma tales), *gbesa* (prophetic word) and *enyamenyawo* (idiomatic expressions). These forms of speech utterances are the vital elements that constitute the beauty of Anlo-Ewe language. Although they may perform different functions at different times the commonality here rests on the fact that they all communicate under an element called sound. Additionally, some of these elements perform multiple functions in Anlo-Ewe traditional media. Let us consider the tongue twister I learned in Anlo-Ewe community as a child below:

*Kokoroko le kokotime, le koklokuku kom, hele kokom kakaka be yea ye ya deko  
yeadu koklokuku fe ko kokoko*

(Kokoroko the cocoa farmer is in the cocoa farm, dressing a dead chicken and laughing aloud that, he shall certainly eat a dead chicken's gizzard). (See also Anyidoho 1997, 125).

Though this tongue twister is generally regarded as an instrument to be employed in acquiring mastery of Anlo-Ewe sound system, its communicative nature extends beyond the boundary of semantic role of tone to the artistic and metaphorical exploration of speech utterance. Ewe poet

and scholar, Kofi Anyidoho (1997) examines this tongue twister in relation to Ewe verbal arts.

He writes:

The main attraction of this particular tongue twister goes beyond the obvious play of reduplication and alliteration marked by intricacies of tonal variation. Tone here makes all the difference between sense and nonsense, between poetry and noise. Without the proper tone being assigned to each syllable, it would be impossible to attribute any coherent meaning to the entire saying (Anyidoho, 1997, 125).

Anyidoho's observation further underscores the tonal nature of Anlo-Ewe language and the semantic function of tone in the entire idiom. However, the poetic image created by this tongue twister relates to Anlo-Ewes desire to accomplish an achievement before announcing it. With the dead chicken as evidence in his hand, Kokoroko, the cocoa farmer in this case is well convinced that he will surely fulfil his long desire to eat chicken; and this achievement with all the excitement necessitated the loud laughing. All these elements constitute a significant part of dance in Anloland.

#### **4.5. Hagbe (Song text)**

Anlo-Ewe song texts draw largely on the varied forms of speech utterances including *lododowo* (proverbs) *nyamenyawo* (idiomatic expressions), *dzidefonyawo* (words of encouragement) and *akofanyawo* (words of consolation). What differentiates *hagbe* from *nyagbe* is *hadzigbe* (singing voice). Fiagbedzi (1997) refers to *hadzigbe* as "the singing voice with particular emphasis on the quality of voice acceptable for singing" (1997, 154). Although pentatonic system is commonly used in Anlo-Ewe songs, the emphasis is placed on the quality of voice. Anlo-Ewe tradition



keepers maintained that the acceptable Ewe singing voice is one of the areas that must be developed from childhood rather than trying to learn it as an adult.

#### 4.6. Akpalu Songs

The act of song composition in Anlo-Eweland between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries according to the tradition keepers was seen as a collective creation by the whole community although there were song leaders who played leading roles. Early 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the recognition of individual song composers. A unique style of folk song composition in Anlo has been credited to Henorga Akpalu Vinorkor Kpodo from Anyako. In his childhood, Akpalu never had parental love as her parents who engaged in petty trading left him with his uncle. Akpalu documented his experiences full of life threatening challenges and this metamorphosed into a genre called Akpalu Ensemble. Ewe historian Klutse Seshie (1991) documented 240 songs composed by Akpalu. Akpalu Ensemble had spread rapidly in the 1960s and 70s in Anlo-Ewe communities including Anyako, Atsiavi, Seva, Keta, Anloga, Genui, Whuti and Anyanui.

Example of Akpalu Song.

<i>Mia torgbuiwo</i>	(Our forefathers
<i>Ketu ye nye afe nami</i>	Ketu becomes our home
<i>Wotso Adza, wova Dogbo</i>	They moved from Adza to Dogbo
<i>Wotso Dogbo, wova Atando</i>	They moved from Dogbo to Atando
<i>Wotso Atando, wova Nortsie</i>	They moved from Atando to Nortsie
<i>Afima ye wova kaka le</i>	It was there, they dispersed
<i>Amesiwo to dusimea, wozu Eweawo</i>	Ewes who moved to the right <i>Aforbuawo</i>
<i>tsi amuto</i>	Some remained at the bank of the river
<i>Esi dedi vate fia nu</i>	Their leader became weak and exhausted
<i>Wobe ye nlo</i>	And he said he has coiled
<i>Wozu nkor wotsor na du la.</i>	This became the name of their home.)

According to Seshie (1991), the above song was composed and sung spontaneously by Akpalu in Anloga during their first version of Hogbetsotso festival in 1962. This annual festival serves as a documented history of the Anlo-Ewe and as such, people from all the thirty-six communities in the Anlo traditional area use the occasion to gather at Anloga for the week long celebration which ends on the first Saturday of November with a durbar of chiefs and the people of the land.

#### **4.7. Patriotic Songs**

The creation of 'revolutionary songs', songs for workers of different political groups, educational songs and others is greatly encouraged in Anlo-Eweland as well as the whole country of Ghana for ideological reasons. An educational song was created in Ghana under the leadership of Jerry John Rawlings, an Anlo-Ewe, who ruled this West African nation for nineteen years. It was composed in 1987, in line with new educational reforms that saw the introduction of the Junior Secondary School (JSS) system. It goes:

*Children of the land,  
Gather courage.  
J S S has come,  
To save all.  
Only handle the tools with care  
And psychomotor skills shall flow.  
Children of the land,  
Gather courage.  
J S S has come,  
To save all.*

The introduction of Junior Secondary School education to replace the then Middle School system became controversial as critics protested that it was not going to benefit the population. The government therefore had a nationwide campaign out of which this song was created to reaffirm its position that the system provides vocational needs for all. Indeed this song worked perfectly well as everybody in Ghana especially children and pupils were made to sing it at least once a day. Because of its musical nature, it was able to electrify the whole country into a unanimous decision that moved the system forward and with excellent results.

In Anlo-Ewe society song as a significant part of dance, has over many decades served as a repository of information, a record of history, a vehicle for expressing feelings and thoughts or public opinion and criticism as well as an avenue of social action. Hence songs may be used for boasting, for inciting people, for expressing public opinion or for making social commentary. The uses of songs in some of the above areas may become institutionalised. A concrete example is *Halo*, an insult song-singing system of the Anlo-Ewe under which insult songs are targeted at certain individuals or groups who are expected to respond through the use of the same medium. Even though this may be a group performance, the community considers it a solo competition in which a soloist creates songs full of insults and directs them at a targeted person with expectation that the opponent must reply with a new insult song. This competition takes place in the night and can continue until the following day. The winner is determined by the number of songs s/he is able to make and sing that unravel certain forbidden or disgraceful activities committed by his/her opponent.

During the period of this competition master song composers must keep awake and become the secret judges. They record the scores until it is all over. Another significant thing about this competition is that, one cannot score a point by being quiet. Silence in this case means you have run out of all derogatory comments about your opponent or you are tired and cannot continue your composition.

One 'Halo' song goes:

<i>Kobla wo mo lakpa</i>	(Kobla, the lazy man with an ugly face
<i>Klito sekoe madi agadza</i>	With a twisted waist, walking like a crab.
<i>Fofowo Dunyo no dolem,</i>	Your father, Dunyo, was seriously ill
<i>Wo koe da de agbaflogawo te loo</i>	And was left lying under a sikamon tree
<i>Ye wo ku yi adzeson</i>	And he died at once
<i>Amea deke melor be yea di o.</i>	Nobody wanted to bury him
<i>Adukpodziviwo nye amenuveawo,</i>	Scavengers were the helpers
<i>Wo du akpa deka de agbe do me.</i>	Who ate half of the body
<i>Ameveamenuwo tso Alakple hafi,</i>	Neighbours from Alakple
<i>Wo te mamlea de gbe hee.</i>	Threw the rest into the bush
<i>Kobla menye ame ne woa gbloe o,</i>	Kobla is not in position to face this disgrace.
<i>Kobla dze alaga do gbe loo.</i>	Kobla fled the community)

It is a serious abomination in Anlo-Ewe society to have a sick family member die without making any significant attempt to find a cure, especially when it is due to lack of funds. In addition, it is a big disgrace to a family whose member has been denied a decent burial.

All these occurrences may have been kept secret from the public for months or years by the family, due to the consequences involved, but the moment *Halo* brings it out; it becomes what is considered in print media as an 'eye-catching headline.'

Moreover, if the issues in the insult song reveal some sort of crime, especially theft, investigations begin immediately and the culprit is then punished accordingly. If the punishment lands the culprit in jail or a heavy fine is imposed on him, potential *Halo* competitors will take record of all the details in preparation for a future contest.

Although, as a text-bound medium, the song can be treated as a form of speech utterance, it has certain advantages over speech in that it can be used for making statements that may be difficult to make otherwise. It therefore enables a person to address a message to the right quarters without open or direct confrontation.

Having enumerated the above point, it is important to state here that assuming all things being equal, songs need not always be addressed to other people. They may be performed for self reassurance or to provide a basis for reflecting on one's own experiences. It is also necessary to stress at this point that while talking to oneself is not generally regarded as a good sign; singing to oneself is not judged in the same light in Anlo-Eweland.

A mother may sing the following song to her baby (who is very young and doesn't really understand any word) asking the child to stop crying and fall asleep.

<i>Doto fo wu nama doto</i>	Stop crying and play me a drum
<i>Mede akplea nedu</i>	I cooked akple, you ate it
<i>Mefo detsi ha nedu</i>	I cooked the soup, you ate it
<i>Nyea medo dorwo negbe</i>	When I sent you, you refused to go.

This clearly shows that an Ewe mother may sing not only songs intended to amuse her baby, but also songs that are of interest to her as well as others, which may be prompted by other people in the communication arena.

#### **4.8. Wugbe (Drum Text)**

A significant part of dance in West Africa is music and in the case of the Anlo-Ewe, this is dominated by drumming. A drum talks by reproducing the tones of intonation patterns and rhythms of utterance, providing these societies the means through which messages of public interest are usually transmitted. Nketia notes, "Words, phrases and sentences may be transformed into drum sounds and reinterpreted in verbal terms by the drummer and listener" (Nketia, 1963, 32).

It would be very misleading however, to assume that this medium works in the whole continent of Africa. As a master drummer with specialisation in a wide range of drum types in Africa, my experience of using drums over three decades in addition to the amount of Ewe material in my possession, make it clear that drum communication can operate effectively only in societies

where language is tonal. That is, where the tones of a language are phonemic and as much a part of the formation of words as vowels and consonants.

The Anlo-Ewe language is a tonal idiom with pitch level determining the meaning of what has been said. In such languages some pairs of words may be distinguished solely by the semantic function of tone. As Nketia (1963) suggests, some grammatical relations or grammatical functions may also be expressed by tone. Hence the tone of words, phrases and sentences in particular contexts tend to be fixed. Ewe drums are carved in various shapes and sizes particularly for the purpose of producing specific tones. Also, these drums are made in such a unique way that they can be tuned to produce a desired tone.

My experience of observing and participating in family and community activities with Anlo tradition keepers, gives me insight into the important role drum language plays in the life of the people. Through constant training which is seen by the Anlo-Ewe as daily routine, a drummer is able to reproduce these artistically so that a listener can interpret the tones in verbal terms. During this routine, drum language is learnt as a special language, and the whole community eventually gets accustomed to hearing fixed sequences in well-defined contexts and also learn to associate them with the appropriate text being relayed. Apart from the Agbadza set of drums, there are other special talking drums in Anlo-Eweland that are used in communication. Notable among them is a special royal talking drum called *Agblorwu* (flexible tone drum), which is strictly owned by the chief and used only by his court musicians to deliver special messages.

Occasions at which this medium of *Agblorwu* is used include announcement of events, particularly those that have to do with royal rites and customs; and also such life cycle events as birth, puberty, marriage and death. Some announce messages about individuals or give general alarm or warning where appropriate. When there is an outbreak of fire or an invasion of the enemy, this may be announced on the drums.

The movements of Anlo-Ewe chief at a ceremonial event do not happen without *Agblorwu*. A drum text is played to announce his arrival so that everyone will stand up. Another text may be played to indicate to the gathering that he has sat down. When the chief is ready to give his speech, this is announced on a drum. At the end of the ceremony a text would be played to alert the crowd that the chief is ready to leave, and another to inform the public about his departure.

The talking drums are also used for playing texts of greeting to important people, the texts of eulogies and personal poetry, in which references to genealogies and allusions to events of historical importance are made. A perfect example of this is the following poetic drum text played on the royal drum of Chief Kposegi III of Anyako in the Volta Region of Ghana:

<i>To, to, to.</i>	(Stop, stop, stop
<i>To koko.</i>	Stop, you must stop.
<i>To kokokokoko.</i>	Stop, you really must...
<i>Wu du gege.</i>	No matter how far you run, <i>Wu du</i>
<i>gege.</i>	No matter how far you run,
<i>Bofrawo, mato wo.</i>	Young warriors, I will capture you
<i>Bofrawo, mato wo kokokokoko.</i>	Young warriors, I will surely capture you.)



According to Fiagbedzi (1997), the historical story behind this drum text traces its origin to a war between Adzida (chief of Ada in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana) and Kposegi, (chief of Tegbi in the Volta Region of Ghana). Fiagbedzi documents,

The drum text took its rise from the time when Adzida, a chief of Ada to west of Anloga sent a message of insult to Kwaku Saklamaniho Kposegi, chief of Tegbi taunting him: "If truly you are as great and powerful a chief as I have been hearing of you, how come your elder brother's skull still lies hanging on my drum? I challenge you to meet me on the islet of the Volta Estuary." To this, the Tegbi chief answered, calling on Adzida to meet him seven days after his messenger reported back to him. As the story went, the two did eventually meet and fought to death. Whereupon in remembrance of the hot chase Kposegi gave to the ten warriors that witnessed the fall of their master, Adzida, he Kposegi caused the drum text to be played on his *agblorwu* thence forth as a sign of his victory during the encounter (1997, 158).

This text is occasionally played on Torgbui Kposegi's *Agblorwu*, usually with two special beaters/sticks that are curved sharply at an angle of about sixty degrees at the playing end. The significance of the text is to present the chief to the people as a supreme power and authority well supported by military valour and bravery. Traditional authorities in Anloga maintain that among the materials that were originally used in decorating the *agblorwu* in the ancient times is the human skull of those who were killed in a war. This assertion is well validated by Fiagbedzi's documentation above.

Anlo-Ewe teacher and health worker, James Dunyah also confirmed this point and related it to the popular saying in Ewe that; "*Nyornu medoa agblorwu o*" (a woman does not create *agblorwu* music/ensemble). James Dunyah explained that "the basic requirement of creating *agblorwu* ensemble is to go to war, capture your opponent and bring the human head with which the talking drum will be decorated" (Dunyah, 2012). Dunyah explained further that, Anlo-Ewe

cultural norms did not allow women to go to war, simply because of the fear that they might lose their lives; hence a woman was disqualified from setting up Agblorwu ensemble. The few of such talking drums I inspected in Anloga had some round objects wrapped in white and red calico as part of the decorative hangings on them. The royal musicians also confirmed that the wrappings were the skulls of those who were killed in wars many centuries ago. They also stated that women were not allowed to go to war and this is the reason why they were not able to meet the basic requirement of forming *agblorwu* musical ensemble hence the above Ewe saying.



24. Agblorwu player at a funeral of a chief in Anloga



25. Agblorwu Ensemble at Anloga.

Another important talking drum in Anlo-Eweland is *adodo/dondo* (the hour-glass shaped drum whose pitch can be regulated to mimic tone and prosody of human speech. It is an instrument not indigenous to the Anlo-Ewe, but a borrowed one together with another double-headed drum called *Brekete* from the Dagomba of northern Ghana and gained acceptance into Anlo musical resource family in the 1940s. Discussing these borrowed instruments in Anlo-Ewe music and dance, Fiagbedzi explains, "The borrowed instruments are blekete and dondo which came from northern Ghana along with the ritual dance drumming of Brekete and Tigare cults that swept through Anlo-Eweland in the forties" (1997, 155).

Ewe talking drums are also used for playing poems of a reflective or philosophical nature and poems which make use of proverbs as poetic images. In this context the drum provides an

avenue for verbal art or expressions of a literary nature. A perfect example is the drum language poetry below:

<i>Helu Hetebe</i>	(Helu the tough man
<i>Amewo wosrowofom</i>	People are beating their wives
<i>Helu de kpo de dada dzi</i>	Helu attacks his mother with a club
<i>Hagba, hagba, hagba</i>	Bang, bang, bang
<i>Wogbloe wo be</i>	When confronted, he replies
<i>Eya ha nyonue</i>	She is also a woman.)

The poetic image created in the above drum text does not only visualise a strong man testing his aggressive powers on his own mother, but also it tells the whole community that Helu is a bachelor. Of course if wife-beating was a fashionable thing to do in ancient times, then the first step to achieving that was to marry a wife. Here is the case, Helu has failed to meet that basic requirement and yet he tries to justify his action by telling the whole community that he can treat his mother as a wife by virtue of the fact that she is a woman.

In addition to the drums, songs are used as a medium of communication. The potential of this system has been fully recognised. Its use of both language and music makes it particularly suitable in situations where speech or music might be inadequate. Even societies that place more emphasis on song as an entertainment or as an art form often fall back on it in times of crisis in order to register protest or for promoting solidarity among those who share a common cause.

#### 4.5. Anlo-Ewe Movements and Gestures

Anlo-Ewe movements and gestures are symbolic and develop from the basic kinaesthetic motion of the body known as *azorlizorzor* (walking). The term *azorlizorzor* also connects to the character, attitude and general behaviour of the Anlo individual. Therefore, I argue here that the word kinaesthesia has so much to say about the moral life pattern of the Anlo-Ewe. Guerts observes this point below:

The point is that in terms of cultural logic found among many Anlo speaking people, there is a clear connection, or association between bodily sensations and who you are or who you become: your character, your moral fortitude is embodied in the way you move and the way you move embodies an essence of your nature (Guerts, 2002, 76).

The above observation is a validation of the idea being proposed here that the Anlo-Ewe communicate by the way they walk, or the walking styles of the Anlo-Ewe reveal so much about their character. It also provides insight into the connection between kinaesthesia and multisensory modalities in dance performance. Distinctively, the Anlo-Ewe have specific adjectives that describe specific style of *azorlizorzor* (walking) and these adjectives help to reveal a person's *nornorme* (character). These include; *atsyorzorli* (moving majestically or proudly) representing a display of wealth and authority. It is important to note here that the body alone cannot complete the full execution of this movement without costume. Thus, to fully exhibit *Atsyorzorli* or *agozorli* or *aglotutu*, one needs to be in a full costume, usually a large piece of hand woven Kente cloth, beads and other ornaments. It is a slow and relaxed style of walking usually by chiefs, kings and queens; and is widely linked to the walking style of the African lizard known as *agama* (the chameleon). *Agozorli* is the main movement in *Gahu*, one of the social dances in Anlo-Eweland.

Another Anlo kinaesthetic term is *megbemegbizorzor* (walking backwards) which signifies a trick of deception. This style of walking constitutes the main movement in *Misego* dance which according to Anlo tradition keepers, was used by their ancestors to escape from Nortsie in the mid-seventeenth century. Anlo-Ewe story tellers explained that their ancestors in their secret plan to escape from the tyrannical rule broke through the Nortsie walls and walked backwards from the kingdom and this made it difficult for the king of Nortsie, Torgbui Agorkorli and his soldiers to trace their footprints. Therefore, misego dance in Anloland is widely regarded as a dance of liberation, a tool with which the escape of their ancestors was successful and the most of all, misego becomes a documented history of how the Anlo-Ewe escape was executed through a trick of deception.

A more complicated Anlo-Ewe lexicon for movement is *zorghorzo* (moving back and forth) signifying a display of indecision, inconsistency, hypocrisy and rumour mongering, all of which render Anlo life ethically unacceptable. This term describes a negative character or disposition of an individual and often implying that the person is lazy, cannot concentrate on any meaningful thing to help the community and therefore, not trustworthy.

While the above three examples may be seen as descriptions of movement, they extend beyond mere walking to patterns describing other human activities including "a person's eating behaviour, the way the person laughs, general mannerisms and so forth" (Guerts, 2002, 83). These body movements and standard gestures, well understood by the people, culminate into some sort of dramatic fusion in Anlo-Ewe dance and further enhanced by other elements that it

incorporates. Indeed, the entire dramatic construction with its characters, plot and theme can be geared towards the message. Similarly, in the non-literate and partially-literate societies, dramatic communication has always formed the basis of rituals and ceremonies, aimed at affirming or renewing the beliefs and values on which community life rests and this is very significant in Anloland, where the spiritual life and culture of the traditional believers are regulated by the cultural norms.

Occasions for the presentation of dramatic enactments also provide opportunities for dealing with matters of immediate concern or for commenting on events through improvised skits that frequently find their way into a larger event or through the symbolic actions of the dance.

The most important events in Anlo-Ewe communities have special dances to infuse fuller meaning into them. Thus dance functions at once as a social and artistic medium. It can give scope for conveying thoughts or matters of personal or social importance through the choice of movement, gesture, postures or facial expressions.

Through dance individuals and social groups are able to show their reactions to attitudes of hostility or co-operation and friendship held by others towards them. They are able to show respect for their superiors or appreciation and gratitude to well-wishers and benefactors. Also, they are able to show their reactions to the presence of rivals or affirm their status to servants, subjects and others or express their beliefs through the choice of appropriate dance vocabulary or symbolic gestures.





26. Different kinds of kinaesthetic patterns used by Anlo women to tease each other.



27. Different kinds of communicative gestures relating to bereavement.

Figure 26, shows a joyful scene where women exhibit different kinds of movements and gestures used in teasing one another. In figure 27, there are four main messages being communicated



through both kinaesthetic and visual forms. First, black and red are funeral colours affirming that the occasion is a mourning one. The girl on the left with her hands cross-resting on her shoulders simply means 'I am helpless or I need help.' The girl in the middle with both hands on her head simply says 'I have a heavy load on my head'. The girl on the right with her fore finger on her lips signifies a state of shock and melancholy. All these three gestures together with the visual elements communicate not only a death of any ordinary person, but specifically, the sudden death of a chief.

#### **4.6. Visual Forms**

Symbolic actions are transient, whereas material symbols or designs placed in defined communication arenas are not limited by time but by space. Where it is necessary to overcome this space limitation and so widen the communication arena, such material symbols may be carried along the required arena. For this purpose the visual element is integrated with dance and drama, as in the case of processions and dances involving the display of masks over a wide area or the display of cult objects, such as sculptured figures of sacred beings or personalities or art treasures from the royal courts in Anlo-Eweland.

In societies in which the arts are still practiced as integral part of community life, visual media are exploited in the home as well as in public places. This field of communication is extended to costume, make-up and even hair styles. Funeral celebrations exhibit different materials that disseminate information about the deceased person. This information may reveal the background of the deceased person as regards to religion, occupation, political and socio-cultural status. This

may be exhibited through the laying in state of the corpse or the design of the coffin. During my field work in Ghana, I attended many funerals that endorsed this assertion. In one of such funerals in Genui near Anloga as captured in figure 29 below, the corpse of Kpogli Dunyah, an accomplished carpenter, was displayed artistically as though he was alive; and with tools in his hands just like a live person working at his carpentry shop. As a reinforcement of this, the designs on Kpogli's coffin as shown in figure 28 were solely images of his carpentry tools including hammer, pincers and saw. See the photographs below.



28. The coffin of Kpogli Dunyah displaying his tools.



29. The corpse of Kpogli Donyah communicating his profession as a carpenter.

Adzovi Nukunu, a close relation of the deceased explained,

In our tradition, we honour people who have contributed so much to help individuals and the whole community. Many have testified about Kpogli's enormous contributions to this community. As a carpenter, he had constructed canoes for fishermen, stalls for market women, arm chairs and other room furniture for the wealthy ones and kitchen stools for many of us (Nukunu, 2012).

#### **4.7. *Seselelame* (Anlo-Ewe multisensory modalities)**

Ewe traditional media therefore employ dance as a holistic art form to play a vital role in regulating social behaviour in communities, stressing here that in these societies, community life is more closely knit and shared. They are actually used for affirming the beliefs and sentiments that bind members together. While movements, gestures and visual patterns may easily be identified as communicative elements in Anlo-Ewe dance performance, internal feelings that help the body to respond appropriately with the appropriate movement to the music are often concealed from the audience. Anlo-Ewe tradition keepers reveal that while a particular

movement may convey a specific message, the dancer also experiences a particular feeling in the process and this is also linked to some daily activities. Gifty Nukunu in an interview summarises below how cooking of *akple* is linked to women's style of dancing Agbadza:

In the process of cooking *akple* (the staple food of the Anlo-Ewe), one must carry certain qualities in the body and it is the same posture that must be exhibited in doing Agbadza dance. In cooking *akple*, you use your left hand to hold the upper part of the *akpledatsi* (cooking stick) and your right hand on the lower part of the cooking stick. Having reached the correct positioning, there is a sensation between the body and the cooking pot; and all of this becomes an exciting motivation with which the food is palatably prepared. The connection of this to Agbadza dance is where women must keep their right hand in a position lower than that of the left (Nukunu, 2012).



30. The correct way of handling *akpledatsi* as linked to hand positioning in Agbadza dance at Genui near Anloga

Furthermore, Anlo Ewe dance is employed under traditional media as an avenue for expressing public opinions, such as criticising individual and social behaviour or commenting on events of social importance. These may be done through the singing of topical songs, gestures, dramatic enactment or satire at story-telling sessions or other public occasions or through the interpersonal

medium. Additionally, Ewe traditional dance may be used for instructional purpose, especially for teaching the young ones. It also plays a very important role in ceremonies and rituals, as well as in the special training institutions that are organized periodically in some communities for young people.

It is very important to note here that because of the role of dance in Ewe traditional media and the influence it exerts on individual and social life, some measures of social control is exercised over its usage. The first deals with the choice of media. In some Ewe societies talking drums are controlled because they function practically as mass media. In some of these societies only the chief may own such drums and only drummers of the royal court may send official messages to the whole community through them (Nketia 74, 37).

In situations where those drums are used to play music for dance, they may be played only in the dance arena for addressing individuals or for making brief statements to those present. Such messages are usually limited to topics of immediate interest and would not cover the range of the repertoire of the drum language. On the same basis the use of sound signals is restricted to well-defined contexts. For example, hunting whistles and trumpets are restricted media and therefore may not be used in other contexts.

The second control deals with the use of media in respect to the time of day or the occasion. For example, in some societies one must not whisper in a house at night as it is done only on the occasion of inviting dwarfs into the house. Media used on ceremonial occasions may not be used

on ordinary occasions. For example, songs prescribed by traditional authorities for particular situations may not, as a rule, be performed outside such contexts. Moreover, the message conveyed through any given media may be limited in scope or confined to only prescribed subjects. The drum language, for example, is a restricted one that deals with only a limited number of subjects.

The exercise of social control over Ewe traditional media is possible only where they are organs of community life and an integral part of people's existence. It is also a rule that traditional media are not controlled by private organisations, nor are they treated as commercial media. The point here touches on the fact that the cultural norms do not allow these media to be used as profit making ventures and as such they serve only the specific local communities in which they were developed.

In general, the scope and content of West African traditional media and their modes of interpretation as demonstrated among the Ewes in this chapter tend to be socially and culturally defined. The symbolism of visual media, the language of interpersonal communication or speech surrogates or any text-bound medium, the choice, organisation and interpretation of expressive movements are all culturally defined. The communication arenas in which these operate are similarly restricted. Audiences are limited to those who share common values, common ideas, common beliefs and who have learned through social experience to identify and interpret messages sent through the different media in which their communities specialise.

#### **4.7.1. Documented Ethnographic Examples**

One can dance, of course, without attempting to convey anything of note, apart from one's personal feeling of exhilaration, restlessness or even sorrow. One may have nothing more specific to say. But my experience as a researcher in Anlo-Ewe communities in Ghana has witnessed several performances in which dancers took their turns in the dancing arena to insult or praise one another; or to express specific sad or happier sentiments. In each of these cases, there was what could be described as a 'post-mortem' suggesting that such behaviour patterns do not pass without comment after the event.

Burns (2009) captures five different cases in which women employed dance in solo pieces to convey the messages they had for their audiences. Of significant importance to my research, particularly this chapter is the role of drum language as a command to which these individual solo performers danced and I find it necessary to look at these examples in greater detail.

In the first example, Burns presents Dasi Amedahe, a middle age woman who had had a series of broken marriages and finally decided to tell her story in a dance performance. The song she sings provides the techniques of resolving disputes between husband and wife. In the DVD documentation version of Burns' work, Dasi is seen standing still and holding two whisks while the song is being sung. But at the sound of drum language from the drums, her dance movement begins in which she strictly responds with her designed movements appropriately to the appropriate phrases. Burns (2009, 134) records the main drum language of Dasi's performance below:



*To to rebegi rebegi, Ga ga rebegi rebegi*  
*To to rebegi rebegi, Ga ga rebegi rebegi*  
*Gategi tegi tete ga to to to.*

Burns also notes that drum patterns used in such performances “do not have any linguistic text associated with them” (2009, 129). The question one would ask is how do these phrases make meaning or convey a significant message. According to Ewe tradition keepers with whom I worked in Anlo-Eweland, the process of creativity and innovation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century appears to be having negative impact on the indigenous Ewe music. Ewe master drummer Prosper Atsu Ablordey who currently works at the Dance Department of the University of Ghana and Nelson Awor Denu, an 82 year old Ewe master drummer with whom I had a number of interviews and performances in Ghana are the pillars behind the discovery of the textual version of Dasi’s drum language below:

<i>Tso tso dabla kaba, dabla kaba</i>	(Arise, arise and be very very quick)
<i>Zor zor dabla kaba, dabla kaba</i>	(Move, move and be very very quick)
<i>Tso tso dabla kaba, dabla kaba</i>	(Arise, arise and be very very quick)
<i>Zor zor dabla kaba, dabla kaba</i>	(Move, move and be very very quick)
<i>Nyornugbeatsu medoa lor o,</i>	(A divorced woman never sleeps)
<i>Tso kaba.</i>	(Rise up at once).

In the other four examples, Burns uses Sylvia Seglah, who found herself in a polygamous marriage after two previous unsuccessful marriages, designed her choreography purposely to insult her husband’s other wife, simply portraying her rival as a prostitute; Esther Amegble, a 33year old woman celebrates in dance her freedom from what could be called ‘cultural



deprivation'. She spent more than two decades of her life in a Christian home where she was never allowed to attend any traditional music and dance events; Dzatugbi Agoha expresses her grief in dance about her husband's marriage to another woman; and Xornam Tagborlo, a 12 year old girl who dances to send a message that although she lost her mother at a younger age, the community has supported her in school where she can at least write the alphabets-A, B, C.

In all these examples, movements and gestures were employed together with themes including using facial expression to articulate whatever feelings the dancer might be going through at the time and wanting to communicate to their audience.

Again in the first example, Burns in an attempt to document the extended version of Dasi's surname, Amedahe, completely missed the lens of Ewe adagana into sending a wrong message despite his DVD footage that captures the verbal narration of Dasi. To be critical of Burns' study is to consider the many concerns likely to be raised by Ewe tradition keepers and other child/human right activists about the use of the 12 year old orphan in public performances including video documentation that saw the girl break down during her narration. This practice which isolated this girl from her peers and rather kept her with adults most of the time raises serious ethical questions.

What is very prevalent in the group Burns studied is the growing pace at which their male musicians impregnate women and marry them to build their desired polygamous families; and there appears to be absolutely no procedures in place to protect this vulnerable girl from

becoming a victim of sexual abuse. Another ethical concern is the question of whether or not Xornam would have been forced to perform as the only child with adults in public places purposely for financial gains were her own mother alive. Regardless of these criticisms, Burns' study remains a window through which an outsider is able to view the unique tradition of using dance as form of impressive communication and education in Anlo-Eweland.

Having characterised dance as the repository of all these elements through which Anlo-Ewe traditional media function effectively as channels for ensuring social cohesion, it is clear that without dance there is no life in Anlo-Eweland. In this chapter, I have demonstrated how dance becomes an integral part of communication among the Anlo-Ewe. I employed the various elements that constitute dance including movement, music, visual forms and multisensory modalities of the Anlo-Ewe to articulate the importance of both verbal and non-verbal communication.

## Chapter 5: Classification of Anlo-Ewe Dances

### 5.1. Introduction

Given the role of music and dance in Anlo-Eweland as a holistic art form in effective communication and education as discussed in chapter four, it may be imperative to also taxonomically classify the various dances in Anlo-Eweland into groups according to the various purposes they serve in the life process of the people. Anlo-Ewe dances can be divided into two main groups known in Ewe language as; *Hu wuawo* (Sacred Dances) and *Ahe wuawo* (Circular Dances). While the circular dances are open to everybody for participation, the performance of spiritual dances in Anlo-Eweland is strictly by membership. Under these two main groups, there are dances solely performed by women; dances performed by only men; dances performed strictly by the youth; and dances performed by the elderly.

Working with Anlo-Ewe material for more than three decades in contrast with my recent ethnographic fieldwork in Ghana produced many perceptions suggesting that West African dance cannot be fully discussed without touching on the various elements that constitute the culture of the people. Many scholars, despite their different approaches and backgrounds, have documented these observations (Blacking, 1982; Gore 1994; Grau 1983; Hanna 1979; Kurath 1960; Lomax 1968; Sachs 1933). These scholars have debated and argued from their various ideological perspectives over the correct definition, code, classification and cross-cultural comparisons of dance. Indeed, a critical analysis of these multiple perspectives has deepened my thoughts to the understanding of philosophy, religion, beliefs, customs, institutions and entire culture of this West African group as rooted in their dances which I set out in four categories namely: War dances, Cult dances, Royal dances and Social dances.

Categorisation of dance in West African societies could be based partly on the role of the body in a society especially in relation to the impact and influence of society on the dancing body. In addition to the body, other social factors must be considered. For example, Amegago (2011) notes, "Classification may overlap with categorisation which refers to the grouping of things, human beings, events or experiences on the basis of common characteristics, appearances, era, sex, gender, age and clan" (Amegago, 2011, 81). Additionally, dance in African societies may be classified according to ranks or status of community members as discovered among the Hausa and the Wolof of Sene-Gambia (Nketia, 1974, 53).

Among the Anlo-Ewe, the totality of their existence is perceived as a concentrated journey that is realised through various segments such as their spiritual life including a moral state of living, their political life and their socio-cultural life. Their spiritual life employs dance in performing devotional and spiritual activities to reach the divine. The political life of the Anlo-Ewe considers Chiefs as their leaders who set out traditional courts to be employed in adjudication and resolution of disputes among members. They also have a defence unit full of warriors who are trained to fight and defend the people and the entire community. Again dance is the tool employed in exhibiting the various royal rites that are performed in the chiefs' palaces as well as those involved in the military culture of the people-thus royal dances and war dances.

The social life of the Anlo-Ewe is characterised with forming dance groups and creating new dances as their leisure time activities. These social dances are popularly known as *Plasiwuwo* (Pleasure dances). *Plasi* is a conversion and modification of the English word 'pleasure'. These

social dances are also known as *Ahiawuwo* (Love dances). Pleasure dances in Anlo-Eweland provide the opportunity for young men and women to interact, socialise to know each other very well and possibly pick up a marriage partner. Simply put, the above discussion provides the consideration to categorise Anlo-Ewe dances into the four groups.

## 5.2. War Dances

The military culture of the Anlo-Ewe people embodies various institutions and skills devoted to the security of the traditional state, its people and values. The most important elements of the military culture are the three military units in which the entire population was strictly controlled. These are: the central defence unit headed by *Awadada*<sup>1</sup> (Commander of Anlo State Army), the left wing defence unit headed by a divisional chief, *Togbui Tamekloe*, and the right wing defence unit headed by another divisional chief, *Torgbui Gbordzor*.

Many of my research participants who belong to at least one war dance group put it plainly that, in the military culture, dance-drumming repertoire, among other things, assumes the responsibility for the emotional and spiritual preparedness of the population for battle. Ladzekpo (1995) validates this assertion in an observation that concludes: "Through the text, texture and choreography of dance, the military valour and skill (prowess) of ancestral heroes are invoked in exhorting their descendants to emulate" (1995, 7). Ladzekpo's observation also makes it clear that sanctity of human life is the most cherished moral value among the Anlo-Ewe as enshrined

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<sup>1</sup> A divisional chief in charge of Anlo State Army who is also the second in command to the Awoamefia. According to Anlo Traditional Council (2003), he belongs to the Agave Clan and holds the Kaklaku stool which antedates the Notsie period of Anlo history. The stool house of Kaklaku is a powerful spiritual emblem of the Anlo-Ewe which people from all over West Africa visit in search of healing, fortune and fame. The stool made the Anlo-Ewe nation strong and feared by other ethnic groups.

in their normal state of mental health thereby making the act of taking human life a taboo. Therefore, through the text, texture and choreography of all these dances, the warriors are also provided with the training and skill of reconciling themselves with breaking the sacred taboo of taking human life before going into battle.

### **5.3. Historical Wars in Anlo-Eweland**

Kumassah (2009, 37-38) presents a chronology of war events involving the Anlo-Ewe during the period between 1750 and 1889. Notable among these wars were: Nonobe war between the Anlos and the Adas in 1750; Sagbadre War-1782 to 1784 between the Anlos and the Danes (who were helped by Adas, Gas and Akwamus). The name 'Sagbadre' was the Ewe linguistic localisation of the name Salvadore, belonging to the Danish Governor of the then Gold Coast; The Gunpowder War with Agudzeawo-1844-1847; Taleto War in 1885 and Shime War in 1889. In all these wars, according to Kumassah, *Atrikpui*, their first war dance was used; first to invoke the warriors' spiritual, emotional and physical preparedness to engage in battle; and second to celebrate with heroic songs and body movements that reinforce messages being communicated through drum languages and chants that replicate the various verbal powers that were employed during the war.

### **5.4. Present Wars Dances in Anlo-Eweland**

Anlo State in contemporary Ghana can boast of many war dances such as *Atrikpui*, *Atsiagbekor*, *Adzogbo*, *Gadzo*, *Kpedzisu* just to mention a few. In the traditional setting, all these war dances are done strictly by men, allowing women to assist in the provision of music in a form of singing and hand clapping. Gender activists may challenge this arrangement but my research participants explained that Anlo men have a responsibility of saving, keeping, helping and loving their wives

and this largely accounts for women not permitted to be at the battle field. The twenty-first century wind of modernisation and globalisation appears, however, to be gradually blowing off the restrictions on such dances making it possible for female dancers to participate in such war dances. In 2007 and 2009 celebrations of Hogbetsotso Festival organised by the Anlo-Ewes in Britain, I had the opportunity of directing the dance performance segment of both celebrations. These experiences saw the use of female dancers in Atsiagbekor dance performances at Tottenham Green Leisure Centre in North London. The decision to use female dancers was collectively taken by the entire group at a general meeting based on the fact that there were not many male dancers available. Although these performances were highly received and appreciated as cultural performances (well visible in the overwhelming responses from audience), when looked at with Anlo critical eye, they undermine the history and significance of Atsiagbekor dance. This breaking of barriers must be seen by scholars as challenges facing 21<sup>st</sup> century scholarship in the face of widely debated notions such as originality and authenticity.

In the olden days these war dances performed functions such as invoking ferocity in preparation for war against other human beings, exhibition of skills of bravery in a more stylised manner; and assumption of emotional and spiritual preparedness for battle. Today, the Anlo State frowns on waging war on fellow human beings; and fully supports declaration of war on mosquitoes by organising communal clean up exercises aimed at eradicating any filthy situations that might attract the malaria parasite carrying insects. Some of their contemporary wars focus on eradicating poverty and hunger by working hard in their farms and fishing sites to store more food while their spiritual wars now target evil spirits that have the potential of bringing about

diseases and squalor. It is important to understand that women play vital roles in fighting these modern wars and as such they must be given the chance to participate in war dances of today.

### **5.5. Cult/Religious Dances**

The religious culture of the Anlo-Ewe embodies knowledge about divinities, their devotional activities, the nature of the universe or the living environment and, more especially, the principles of a divine or moral state of living. Anthropologist Geoffery Parrinder noted that the whole organisation of African society is maintained by the spiritual forces that pervade it (1954, 27). Similarly, Mbiti (1969) states that, "Africans are notoriously religious" (1969, 1). As revealed by these 20<sup>th</sup> century scholars, the Anlo-Ewe like many other West African societies believe that human beings are deeply religious creatures dwelling in a religious universe (Ladzekpo, 1995; Nukunya, 1969; Tierou, 1989). These scholars state that Africans including the Anlo-Ewe conceive the universe as consisting of dynamic forces which are constantly influencing one another. Human beings, in both living (visible) and non-living (invisible) states, animals, vegetables and minerals all possess this vital force in varying amounts (Ladzekpo, 1995). Similarly, Yartey (2009) states, "African cosmology reflects a continuity of experience and reoccurring relationship between the past and the present, the ancestors and the living; the unexpected and the familiar" (Yartey 2009, 256). As a result, there is this perception in Anlo-Eweland that, the constant interaction of these forces, which at times affects human existence in negative ways, compels humankind to gain the spiritual knowledge required in dealing with such situations. In other words, the Anlo-Ewe believe that natural forces can be manipulated by humanbeings through the use of a particular spiritual knowledge. Hence, instead of events



occurring by chance or arising from unknown causes, these events can be controlled so to occur according to the intention and necessity of humankind.

Everything among the Anlo-Ewe has a spiritual meaning or is understood in a spiritual sense. For example, the birth of a new life, puberty or the marriage of a young adult are attributed to divine goodwill. Sickness, death and other misfortunes are ascribed to divine intervention in the form of punishment for wrongdoing. Therefore, the Anlo-Ewe in a conscious effort to keep this spiritual life as a tradition, perform devotional activities for the divinities in line with what is known in Anlo-Eweland as principles of divine and moral state of living. These rituals are usually placed on the top list of the Anlo-Ewe hierarchy of values. It is important to note here that these rituals cannot be performed without dance. Dances involved in performing these religious activities are known as cult dances, religious dances or ritual dances.

Examples of cult dances in Anlo-Eweland include *Yeweh*, *Efa*, *Korku*, *Fofui*, *Hongbato*, *Blekete* and *Atigeli*. Among these examples, *Yeweh* dance appears to be more encompassing than any other religious dance in Anlo-Eweland, and as such, it will take another research to delve into the whole of *Yeweh* system.

According to traditional scholars, *Yeweh* dance is an amalgamation of dances that are performed to honour *Yeweh*, one of the most influential deities in Anlo-Eweland. Kumodzie (2009) defines *Yeweh* as "an ancient universal knowledge system that had served in diverse forms as the bedrock or foundation for the birth and progress of human societies since time immemorial"

(Kumodzie, 2009, 5). Anlo-Ewe tradition keepers stated that in the religion of Yeweh, members worship 'So' or 'Torhonor'- (the divinity of thunder). Yeweh dance comprises a full repertoire that consists of thirteen different types of dance pieces. However, these dance pieces are responsible for the performance of rituals for the different aspects of the Yeweh system.

They are:

1. *Aforwu*- the dance of progression in life.
2. *Sogbadzi*- the dance for the search of truth and justice.
3. *Awlewu*- the dance of dedication to the creator Mother Goddess.
4. *Sowu*- the dance of the evocation of God.
5. *Dawu*- the dance of God's creative force.
6. *Husago*-the dance of liberation from forces of destruction.
7. *Akorwu* - the dance of the display of beauty.
8. *Adawu*- the dance that lifts members' soul into the blissful abode of the creator.
9. *Agbowu*- the dance of the Yeweh School that teaches knowledge of nature.
10. *Efawu*- the dance of the Yeweh School that teaches knowledge of the mind.
11. *Zakadzawu*- the dance of evocation to the controller of the wheel of death and rebirth.
12. *Agowu*- the dance of knowledge, peace and blessing.
13. *Tsinawu*- the dance of the renewal of consciousness.

The few Yeweh members I spoke to as part of this research explained that, becoming a member of the Yeweh cult is a long process which can take three to ten years or more, depending on what aspect of Yeweh you wish to worship. They pointed out that, the neophyte has to attend what is in all but name a school. During the initiation process one has to learn the secret languages of the Yeweh cult because they are the only languages spoken in the shrine. During this period other rites are performed, which cannot be completed without music and dance.

It is a general perception in Anlo-Eweland that members of Yeweh cult are law abiding individuals. This is linked to the belief that the deity hates criminals and dishonest people in the land; and therefore, punishes them by striking them to death. Burns (2009) captures one of such thunder strikes involving a Christian porridge seller who refused to honour the invitation of the shrine in connection with her dishonest financial dealings with a member of Yeweh cult. He writes,

Less than two weeks later, lightning actually struck the house of porridge seller, killing both the girl and their mother. This type of divine execution is extremely dangerous and expensive for the extended family to deal with. The shrine will demand exorbitant sums of money to fund the necessary rituals of appeasement which may also drag on for several years (Burns, 2009, 26).

Burns' account makes us understand that the porridge seller decided to assert powers under the umbrella of Christianity rather than submit to cultural authority. But Anlo-Ewe Christians explained in clear terms that although they believe Christianity has power to protect its followers, the rules in the faith do not support dishonest dealings and therefore it is possible to find a Christian fall a victim to thunder strike through disobedience.

## **5.6. Social Dances**

Among the leisure time activities that dominate the social life of the Anlo-Ewe is the forming of dance clubs. It involves the artistic integration of three main art forms: song, drumming and dance. This amalgum is termed in the Ewe language as *lekewornuwo* (beautifying elements of society).

The Anlo-Ewe form these dance clubs to entertain themselves and refresh their minds after a day's hard work; to use them as a welcome event in receiving visitors and other very important personalities; to employ them as socio-cultural tools in the performance of burial and funeral rites of a departed member of the community; to strengthen themselves in the display of bravery in times of competitions; to exhibit their joy in times of victory over their opponents in a law court, arbitration and other forms of judicial encounter. They also form dance clubs to use as a tool of communication to inform other communities about an event or any planned function that deserves such publicity; to exhibit their faith and worship; to display elements of their culture such as traditions, customs and institutions; to unite themselves in one spirit in performing communal labour; and to express their individual and collective feelings and thoughts in public.

The process of forming a dance club begins with a meeting involving three founding members: namely the *Henorga* (master song composer), the *Azagunorga* (master drummer) and *Wumega* (master choreographer). It continues by involving the whole community in regular evening rehearsals, generally known as *Hakpa* (singing practice) where there is a great amount of teaching and learning of the songs composed by the *Henorga*.

*Henorga* creates songs often by using distinct text and tunes in a compositional process. The text is usually made up of speech utterances that express complete thoughts, set up within their own poetic structure of rhythmic patterns of long and short syllables. According to Fiagbedzi (1997), the speech tones of such songs are high, low, and middle and of verbal-phrase lengths of various

sizes, including strategically placed units of other kinds, all or some of which can be used in generating suitable melodies.

The evolution of these social dances may take a considerable time, usually between three to six months. During the first few months of creating the show, the musicians and dancers work together to ensure that there is enough variety of songs, styles of dancing and other movement steps. The new songs are sung freely without tying them to particular rhythms. This helps the group to master the lyrics in order to assign the right tone to the various words by using the right pitch. Another important part of the creation process is the acquisition of musical instruments and costume. While the purchase of musical instruments is a collective responsibility, for which members are levied, the costume type and style selected is shown to the group and members save money to acquire theirs individually. The whole process of creating the dance is considered as late evening time practice or night time activity, where members do not disclose anything about their new songs and dance movements until the piece is completed and launched publicly with a series of performances.

The outdoor presentation of the dance begins with a massive procession. Depending on their choreographic arrangement, its front area may consist of women, usually in two or three straight lines, each of them holding a pair of wooden clappers used in accompanying their songs. Next to the women are the men, also in lines, with each of them holding an *Axatse* (rattle), with which they are able to hold a defined and constant rhythm to accompany their songs. In addition, they

all move together at the same time with the right gesture and the right movement as choreographed by the master choreographer.

The next stage is a very important one called *Banyinyi* (asking permission from the ancestors for the commencement of the main performance). This underscores the high level of spirituality that forms an integral part of Anlo-Ewe life as discussed in the previous section. Hence, dances that are used in *Banyinyi* must be spiritual forms and this explains why *Efa* dance is the first piece to think about when inviting ancestors to join them. It usually consists of two short pieces of *Efa* music and dance. This is preceded by the pouring of libation in which the dance-drumming spirit of ancestors is invoked to guide and protect them throughout the whole performance.

Another significant feature is a special homage in form of rhythm presentation pieces called *Wuxexle* (reading through dances or going through dances). These form a curtain-raiser, involving the short performance of some selected music and dance types associated with deities or royal stools, usually one to two minutes per piece in length. The pieces selected for this presentation include: *Akpoka*, *Atrikpui*, *Misego*, *Gakpa*, *Babasiko* and *Husago*.

The main dance begins with what is generally known as *Wutsortsor* or *Wulili* (starting up the the dance or introducing the main dance). It is the opening part of the new choreographic piece that has been created. This comprises a long session in which all the new skills learnt regarding drumming, dancing and singing are artistically displayed for the first time in public.

Half way through the show, there is another segment called *Hamekoko* (song cycle singing). This part is devoted to the singing of a series of songs accompanied by *Gakogui* (double bell) and *atoke* (banana bell). This segment of the show reveals its beauty as they sing in a circle, moving in an anti-clockwise direction. The choreographic movements in this part are mostly common gestures reaffirming the messages that are being sent to the general public in the songs.

The song composer takes full control of the session by singing the solo parts and handing it over to the ring leaders who then call the whole group to join in a chorus, full of pentatonic voices of different kinds, well blended into the bell sounds. The song composer handles two horse tails as a sign of high authority, while the ring leaders handle one each.

The show for the first day ends with the final part of the new creation. The whole show is repeated for six more days, during which all the actions performed on the first day are revisited, except for the procession.

### **5.7. Atsiafulegedi a Social Dance of the Anlo-Ewe**

The Anlo-Ewe term *Atsiafulegedi* is a combination of two Ewe words: *Atsiafu* (the sea), and *Alegede* ( a behaviour pattern full of gossip, lies, hypocrisy, backbiting and other nefarious activities that render one's life ethically incorrect.) The name describes the splashes and the

waves of the sea as a perfect picture of the word *Alegede*. When you mention the sea, one may think of fishermen but the dance makes no allusion to them.

The *Atsiafulegedi* dance therefore uses the sea as a concrete picture to educate the youth about unacceptable behaviour patterns that are likely to bring division among the members of the community. The dance imitates the waves of the sea. This is seen in the main movement where the torso sways exactly like the sea waves. The waist helps the torso in executing the movement while the legs also play a very important role in controlling the steps. Just as the sea splashes go up and down, in the same way the dancer's whole body also moves from a high level to a low level, generating what is normally referred to as 'continuous up and down movement' in a perfect legato manner.

The movements of the hands are very important. The left hand stays in front of the dancer with the palm facing the dance floor and remains in that position while the right hand moves rhythmically under and above the static left hand. The knees are slightly bent to ensure a free up and down movement of the body. It is very important to mention here that this movement is strictly for girls. The boys have their own movement which involves the body standing up straight position with the hands clapping rhythmically in the front and back of the dancer. This is a vigorous and sharp movement, which involves the straight body of the dancer jumping and landing on both feet in harmony with the claps.



*Atsiafulegedi* is done by the youth, especially the young ones. The dance socialises them. It is performed in pairs consisting of a male and a female. The two dancers face each other as they do the dance. It can be found in towns in the Volta Region of Ghana such as Adutor, Genui, Whuti and Anloga. It can be easily re-choreographed with much emphasis on the dramatic fusion, which can be used as a tool in educating young people about some social vices in the community.

My first appearance on stage as a master drummer was with my school cultural group to stage this dance in a competition. In fact, the ten minute choreographic piece was about 'poverty as one of the main causes of teenage pregnancy'. The most fascinating thing about the piece was that every action was controlled by the master drummer right from the beginning to the end. The annual Inter-schools Music and Dance festival, organised and funded by the Ghana Education Service took place at Anloga E.P. Middle School, in the Volta Region of Ghana, in 1979. It was one of the many cultural festivals instituted during the postcolonial period to harness the music, dance and performing arts potential of Ghanaian children.

Today, many clubs continue to dramatise certain realities of life during the performance. In Whuti, a village near Anloga in the Volta Region of Ghana, for instance, the club dramatises real evidence about the difficulties of polygyny. In the dance drama there are two women (rivals). They exhibit their individual spirit of jealousy. At the end of this performance people begin to see the mistakes they have made in life by practising polygyny when they were not in position to do so. The songs of *Atsiafulegedi* speak about the kind of people in the club, their identity and their capabilities. They also serve as a voice that communicates to the public about health, social, economic and political issues.

One song goes:

<i>Miawoe nye gegeawo.</i>	(We are young and dynamic ladies.
<i>Amekowoe nye tugbeawo hee?</i>	Who are the real beautiful ones?
<i>E hoo nami, mia woenye gegeawo.</i>	Look, we are the pretty ones.
<i>Ewua míefo na, Atigowua miefo na.</i>	Our repertoire is so rich.
<i>Ameadewo nanye Gbedasi,</i>	Our members include Gbedasi.
<i>Amea wo nanye Dadzengo,</i>	They include Dadzengor.
<i>Ameawo nanye Hushie woayo.</i>	And also included is Hushie.
<i>Ega di yoo miadu ye ne duawo na se.</i>	We will dance to the rhythm.
<i>E hoo nami, miawoe nye gegeawo.</i>	Look, we are the pretty ones).

Another song goes:

<i>Danye viwo le atiawo te,</i>	(My siblings under the palm tree
<i>Be ago nege ne yeadu</i>	Waiting for the palm fruit to drop
<i>Ago nege ne yeadu.</i>	Let the palm fruit drop for my consumption
<i>Danye viawo le atiawo te,</i>	My siblings under the palm tree
<i>Be ago ne ge ne yeadu</i>	Waiting for the palm fruit to drop)

Instead of climbing the tree to reach the palm fruit, the siblings are sitting under the palm tree, waiting for the nut to drop so that they can eat. They will have to wait a long while until the fruit is no longer fresh enough to hang onto the tree. Perhaps it will be rotten, by which time many of them would have died of hunger. This song speaks to people who are lazy. It warns people who do not work, but want to depend on others for their survival. In short, it is a song that charges all members, as well as the whole community, to work hard so that there will be no problem of dependency in society.

Interestingly, *Atsiafulegedi* is the name given to the instrument that introduces the music before the drums come in. It is a traditional bow made with a can, string and stick. The bow is played by using a short broom stick. You can have as many as four such bows beginning the music. Those who play the bows sit on the floor and stretch their legs in between the stick and the string. Normally the agbadza set of drums are used with *Atimewu* as the master drum. In a situation in which the club cannot afford the *Atimewu*, the sogo is used as the master drum<sup>2</sup>. Even though the timing is like that of a fast agbadza, the musicians do not play agbadza rhythms. *Atsiafulegedi* has its own rhythms. For instance, the bow has a popular text that says:

*Xormenya, numa menyo o* (Xormenya, that behaviour is not good.)

*Xormenya, agoduia tuge* (Xormenya, you are trying to disgrace yourself.)

*Atsiafulegedi* is performed on occasions like marriage, funerals, anniversary celebrations and other social gatherings.

## 5.8. Royal Dances

The political system of Anlo-Ewe is controlled by a hierarchy of chiefs with the overall supreme power vested in the *Awoamefia* (the paramount chief) who is highly regarded as the King of Anlo State. Each of the 36 communities of the Anlo State has a leader referred to as *Fia* (chief) who holds the highest and most respectable position in the community.

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<sup>2</sup> As explained in earlier chapters, dance in Anlo-Eweland is not a profit making venture. Therefore, virtually no money comes to the club from performances. However, members are levied according to their financial strength towards buying of musical instruments. *Atimewu* is the most expensive drum in the set and in some cases, group contrinutions alone do not meet its cost without donation from chiefs and elders.

Chiefs and elders with whom I worked in Anloga and its surrounding communities in Ghana point to the meaning of the word *Fia* as: to vow, swear or pledge. According to these traditional leaders, this title name requires its bearers to swear, vow or pledge to be faithful and loyal to God, the stool, the state and the service of the people. Kumasah (2009) discusses rites, symbolism and politics in Anlo-Eweland and observes that, the title, *Fia* is believed to possess two bodies represented in one unique royal body. He explains that a chief possesses “a mortal, immortal, political and mystical body” (Kumasah 2009, 76). A chief may be contextualised as a mortal body with a conferred immortality through a process of installation which gives him both physical and spiritual powers required for governing a community of state.

One unique element of this system places the chief as the gate keeper of community in both the physical and the spiritual world. My first point of entry into Anyako in my recent ethnographic fieldwork was the palace of Torgbui Dzokoto Gligui, the paramount chief and head of that political unit of Anlo-Eweland. There are dances that are done right from the beginning through to the end of the installation process and continue to be performed at the court of the chief palace. These dances are called *Fiafemewuwo* (royal dances) and are used in welcoming the chief, elders and other prominent visitors. Some of them serve as processional dances that accompany the chief being carried in a palanquin to the durbar ground of a traditional festival. Royal dances in Anlo include *Afli*, *Nyayito*, *Apkalu* and *Adzikpo*.

## **5.9. Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have discussed dance as related to the various aspects of Anlo-Ewe life such as spiritual, political and social dimensions. I have also categorised Anlo-Ewe dance forms into four groups namely, war, dances, cult or religious dances, royal dances and social dance. Some examples have been provided and discussed to validate the significant role dance plays in the entire life of the Anlo-Ewe.

## **Chapter 6: Development of Dance in Post-Colonial Ghana.**

### **6.1. Introduction**

Dance in Ghana appears to have had challenging experiences in development and growth over the last five decades. Art institutions that were established as post independence organisations, tasked with the responsibility of developing Ghanaian arts and cultural heritage have gone through a number of changes in the period. This chapter looks at the development of dance in Ghana from the immediate post colonial period (1957-1962), full of community dance practice, through to the institutionalisation of dance and its development as an academic discipline in 1962. The chapter examines Ghanaian traditional tools and techniques in the transmission of dance, the use of dance to create a national identity through the formation of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, the impact of political interference on these arts institutions and the position of dance scholarship in contemporary Ghana, with the aim of identifying and addressing the factors that influence dance transmission in Ghana.

### **6.2. Ghana's Independence**

Ghana was the first African nation to gain independence from British colonial rule. This historic event happened on 6<sup>th</sup> March, 1957 under the leadership of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, a committed Africanist from the Nzema ethnic group of Ghana. In fact, in his independence speech Nkrumah declared "the independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked to the total liberation of the African continent" (Nkrumah, 1957). This declaration saw many African leaders declaring support for the Ghanaian leader and soliciting his support in pursuance of the said ambition. In the preceeding chapters I discussed how important names are in Africa in terms of their meaning

and what they signify. The same applies to colours in Ghana, for example, how Ghana's natural resources are represented by the various colours in the national flag.

### **6.3. The Significance of the Ghanaian Flag**

Ghana's natural resources and the social life of the people are symbolised in the colours of the national flag- red, yellow, green and a black star in the middle. The red colour symbolises the selfless efforts of those who fought and shed their blood in bringing freedom to the people. Therefore, the red in Ghana means bravery, sacrifice and hard work. Yellow stands for the mineral resource of Ghana which includes gold, diamonds, bauxite, manganese and oil. Green represents Ghana's lush investment in agriculture with timber and cocoa as the major cash crops. The significance of a single black star in the middle of the flag goes beyond the fact that there are black people on the continent of Africa to the call for all African nations to come together as one. Simply put, the black star stands for African unity.

In as much as colours are very important to Ghanaians, it is imperative to state here that in addition to red and white, black is one of the three colours that are used in performing funeral rites depending on the circumstances under which the death occurs. This will be discussed in detail in the sections that follow.

### **6.4. Ghana's Cultural Emancipation**

It is widely known that during nearly 100 years of the Gold Coast's colonial period, the British tried to impose their beliefs and values on the society they governed, with the aim of moulding

the lifestyles of their subjects on a European model. Colonisation then transformed itself into religion with the colonisers preaching a single sermon titled, *Ignore your tradition and take mine*. According to Ugandan philosopher John Murungi (2004), the colonisers saw themselves as the saved and the saviours; while the colonised were regarded as the sinners, and the ones in need of a saviour.

The saviours need not necessarily be men or women of the cloth. They also come as academics. These saviours, these missionaries, have done a remarkable job of recruiting Africans to carry out the evangelical message they have brought, or that they seek to bring, to Africa. It is a message that harbours a political dimension. Evangelism, as is the case with missionary activity, is not solely a religious phenomenon. It is thoroughly a political phenomenon. It is a conquest of others. It is war by other means. As it has been introduced in Africa by Euro-America, academics is evangelism by other means (Murungi 2004, 11).

Murungi's argument emphasises that colonisers' engagement in African affairs was subject to their own European interest rather than the African interest and the case of Ghana was no exception. Not only did this doctrine cause extensive loss of good values embedded in many of the Ghanaian traditional systems of the people, but also it created a significant element of division between the youth who had been lured into the European way of life and the older generation, who believed that life in Africa and Ghana in particular must be strongly connected to tradition, customs and institutions that define the Ghanaian/African.

Consequently, the aforementioned brought into existence the Christian notion that dance, as a bodily expression, was immoral and evil. People were discouraged from dancing; and dance and the related performing arts were placed on the back burner in society's development programmes. As a little boy in primary school in Ewe community in Ghana in the late 1970s, my experience of being lashed for not attending church service on Sunday is enough evidence of attempts to separate young people from the traditions of their ancestors. I have vivid memories of



roll calls after church service, where every child was given a number to produce at school the next day when non-church goers (usually referred to as devil's children) were caned. Any time some of us were spotted drumming or doing a traditional dance with tradition keepers, a message would be sent to our class teacher and the result would be the devil's tag constantly placed on us.

John Mbiti summarises it all below:

Christianity from Western Europe and North America has come to Africa not simply carrying the Gospel of the New Testament, but as a complete phenomenon made up of Western culture, politics, science, technology, medicine, schools and new methods of conquering nature (Mbiti 1992, 212).

All the above resulted in Nkrumah's realisation of the power of arts in nation building and this brought forth a concept of cultural emancipation, which refers to a conscious effort by the Ghanaian citizenry to reconcile with their arts and culture.

## **6.5. Formation of the Ghana Dance Ensemble**

One of the products of cultural emancipation became the establishment of the Arts Council of Ghana in 1958 and later the Institute of African Studies was set up at the University of Ghana, Legon, tasked with the responsibility of researching and documenting Ghanaian/African arts and cultural heritage. Cultural theorist Kwame Botwe-Asamoah (2005) elucidates the chronology of events set up by Nkrumah which eventually facilitated the formation of the Arts Council of the Gold Coast in 1954; and later the name changed to the Arts Council of Ghana in 1958. He asserts,

The Ministry of Education in 1954 contacted the British Council to set up a body to look into the possibility of creating a national theatre movement. Subsequently, the proposal of Brian Jones of the British Council recommended the establishment of a committee for promoting and developing appreciation of the arts, preserving and fostering the traditional arts and culture of the Gold Coast (Botwe-Asamoah 2005, 125).

Although the committee's recommendation brought into being the Arts Council of the Gold Coast in 1955 under Nkrumah's prime ministership as Botwe-Asamoah's study indicates, Nkrumah could not regard it as a property of Ghana simply because it was under the management of the Arts Council of Britain. It is interesting that the artistic somewhat precedes the political and in a way it emphasises that the rallying together through the arts strengthened the political movement for liberation. However, the first anniversary celebration of Ghana's independence coincided with the re-establishment of the Arts Council in 1958 with many music and dance groups who staged "performances from all regions of the country at the Accra Sports Stadium" (Botwe-Asamoah 2005, 126).

In 1962 the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana gave birth to the Ghana Dance Ensemble through a process similar to what the choreographer and scholar, Anthony Shay (2002) describes as 'folklorisation.' Shay adopts the term from ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino<sup>1</sup> and uses it to describe "the staging of folk dance by urban-based, professional state folk dance companies in the former Soviet Union as well as ensembles from other parts of the world" (2002, 74). Shay's discussion makes it clear that the term folklorisation involves two characteristics. First, it involves relocating native customs from their original context and placing them in new and urban contexts; and second, the whole process is sponsored by the state. Relating this discussion to Shay's standpoint locates Ghanaian dances as the native customs that were being relocated from their various local/traditional/indigenous contexts to a new urban context and with full direct funding from the Ghana Government. Badu-Younge (2002) observes "As contexts change, spatial arrangements have also been affected resulting in modification in

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<sup>1</sup> American ethnomusicologist whose interests include the growth of nationalism through music and the role that music plays in creating the connections that define a society.

movement and music. These changes have affected the original aesthetics of Ghanaian dances and altered the cultural perspective" (2002, 13).

While it may be important to conclude that through the above process the Ghana Dance Ensemble came into being as a post- independence dance company led by two prominent Ghanaian music and dance scholars, Kwabena Nketia and Mawere Opoku; it is significant to venture into the discussion of factors that might have challenged the whole process in multicultural Ghana.

The process of constructing a national identity through dance in Ghana could not be an easy one given the fact that the country is partitioned into ten regions namely; Upper West, Upper East, Northern, Brong-Ahafo, Ashanti, Western, Central, Eastern, Volta and Greater Accra regions. (See the details in figure 31 below). Under each of these ten administrative regions there are many districts with a number of ethnic groups and in all, about seventy-nine languages are spoken in Ghana; and this diversity could be seen as a major challenge for any move towards nationalisation. When one lives in a country that speaks many languages revealing the diversity of cultures, the most difficult venture in that environment is to attempt harnessing these many ethnic cultural forms into one national identity. But Nkrumah and his team of cultural experts including Opoku and Nketia believed that the formation of national identity could be achieved through dance. Ghanaian music and dance scholar Chester Habib Iddrisu (2011) argues that dance became the ideal art form for this political agenda due to its role in Ghanaian life cycle events. He asserts,

The awakening of the African consciousness during the nationalist era was achieved not only through political action, but through application of non-verbal art forms on national and international stages. What was the rationale of African intellectuals in selecting non-verbal art forms as appropriate media to convey the true African image to the world? Perhaps the most important reason is that non-verbal art forms, particularly dance, have always been central to indigenous ceremonies, festivals, and life events (2011, 113).

While Iddrisu's view underscores how Ghanaian life as well as the entire culture of the people is linked to dance, developing these ethnic dances into a national culture seemed more complex than we can imagine. Also, the theatricalisation of the dances to be performed on stage for an audience was a direct violation of the traditional norms that see dance as a shared tradition of the people in the community. This was not only a way of disempowering the indigenous people culturally but also they risked being represented by other people who may not belong to the native culture. Perhaps this particular challenge could be addressed by allowing Shay's notion of 'parallel traditions' to dominate the whole process.

Shay uses parallel traditions to refer to a process of integrating elements from two performances namely, those for the stage and those from the field into one piece of choreography. He observes, "these parallel traditions can often approach one another in the use of 'authentic' elements found in the choreographic output of the professional companies as well as in the degree of theatricalisation found in 'traditional' performances" (2002, 17).

The process of constructing a national identity in the face of many ethnic groups may result in lack of fair and adequate representation of the various native peoples and their respective native cultures they consider not only as a heritage, but also as a well from which they draw knowledge and experience for their mind, soul and spirit. As

Shay observed in the former Soviet Union, "having one's own dance company to represent each recognised ethnic unit became a political goal and a symbol of recognition" (2002, 23). Similarly, Grau and Jordan (2000) observe that, "the arts including dance, can reflect, reinforce, prompt, challenge as well as be appropriated in the quest for identity. They are never politically innocent: they operate in dialogue with both exclusive and inclusive ideologies" (Grau and Jordan, 2000, 4). These observations are particularly relevant to the Ghanaian situation, where unfair representation of an ethnic group could be seen as disenfranchising that group and this may lead to different political crises including ethnic wars.

Figure 31 below shows the 10 administrative regions of Ghana with their capital cities. In each of these regions there are many ethnic groups with different languages and different cultural practices.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Although the formation of the Ghana Dance Ensemble generated some level of conflict between the custodians of the various folk dances and the managers of the national company, it is fair to say Nketia and Opoku deserve the credit for doing a selfless job in the midst of all the above challenges. These two leaders belong to the Akan ethnic group and could be inevitably subjective in the criteria they used to select the various ethnic dances. They could have also resorted to a phenomenon Shay terms 'stereotypification' referring to "tensions and pressures placed upon the creators of the repertoire to represent the nation in a particular fashion" (2002, 40). In fact, this phenomenon could have forced them to put Akan music and dance at the forefront for promotion to the detriment of the others. Collaborating and performing with the Ghana Dance Ensemble for more than five years gives me deep insight into the repertoire of this national group with much evidence to suggest that Opoku and Nketia had incredibly done a creative, selfless and fair job in conformity with the principles of fairness and social equality. For example, movements from the more than sixty dances in Anlo-Eweland can be found in the repertoire of the Ghana Dance Ensemble although they have gone through processes of change, modification and reconstruction; and this observation is visible in the case of the other Ghanaian ethnic groups. Therefore, the creators of the Ghana Dance Ensemble may be credited for their remarkable work that challenges and fascinates the minds of the Ghanaian citizenry and continues to respond to the identity issues of the diverse groups of this former British colony.

Scholars including William Adinku (1994), Kwabena Nketia (1977) and Katharina Schramm (2000) have shared their thoughts on the formation of the Ghana Dance Ensemble. While Adinku considers the national dance company as a repertory troupe experimenting with traditional

dances and their models in new development, Nketia and Schramm see it as a new cultural movement that ideally contributes to the creation of national identity.

As has been demonstrated in the earlier chapters, dance plays a very important role in the life of the Anlo-Ewe as well as in the life of the entire Ghanaian people. It begins right from the birth of a child which is considered as a very important event in the community, given the fact that the ownership of the child is not limited to the parents alone. It is the full responsibility of the community to assume ownership and cultural training of that child. Badu-Younge(2003) notes, "In African culture, the entire community including parents, older siblings, grandparents, clan members and neighbours raise the children to become productive and successful individuals in order to have an industrious and prosperous community" (2003, 34). The point being articulated here explicates that any member of the community has the right to provide food, clothes, shelter and other basic necessities to the child and also to reprimand him/her when the need arises. This reminds me of one unpleasant incident that happened to me in Ghana during my formative years. I was climbing a mango tree in the neighbourhood and all of a sudden, one of the elders in the village appeared in the scene and was concerned about my choice to engage in such a dangerous act at that tender age of eight. He ordered me to come down but I ignored him and later told him to get out of my sight before I call my mum to deal with him. The elderly man disappeared for few seconds and came back but with a cane which he used to whip me several times after bringing me down from the mango tree. It never ended there, he took me to my home and narrated the whole story to my mother who also whipped me several times in front of the elderly man and repeatedly said: "Oh! Kwashie, you have disgraced me and your father". Reflecting on

this unpleasant childhood experience provided me a window through which dance is seen as a tool with which Anlo-Ewe moral and ethical teachings are done. Anlo-Ewe tradition keepers maintained that dance is the storehouse of principles and mechanisms that govern the entire life process of the people. Some of the virtues Anlo-Ewe children learn through dance include respect for authority, appreciating their neighbours and looking at the whole community as a big one family to which every member of the community belong. In an interview, the Anlo-Ewe tradition keeper Patience Ali stated, "because of its role as a tool in knowledge transmission dance is performed at every stage of Anlo-Ewe life-from birth to transition" (Ali, 2012).

Dance is performed as part of the ritual of naming ceremony of a child. Although contact with European culture to some extent has affected the performance of this ceremony which takes place usually seven days after the birth of the child, many Ghanaians have kept to their naming practices. Dance is also widely used to usher children into adulthood. Puberty rites cannot be performed without dance. In some Ghanaian communities, there are specific puberty dances. A good example is the Klama Dance of the Krobo people in the Eastern Region which is the main dance used in performing *Dipo* (puberty rites of the Krobo people).

The next stage of life where dance is vital is marriage. Marriages are performed according to the customs within the traditional norms of the various ethnic groups and these differ in various ways but they all have a commonality which is centred on dance. Example of wedding dance is 'Toura' of the Dagomba people in the Northern Region. In this dance, women with large



buttocks dance in pairs by hitting their buttocks against each other in a humorous style. The men are not allowed to do it but they play the drums to provide the Toura music.

Interestingly, funerals are the most expensive events in the life cycle of Ghanaians. Ghanaians are able to preserve a dead body for many months to enable them raise the amount of money needed to organise a good funeral. All the ethnic groups have specific dance types for celebrating funerals. The Anlo-Ewe use *Agbadza* and this is done overnight in a wake keeping event where the dead body is displayed for public viewing. There are other funeral dances such as Akan's *Kete* dance, the Ada's *Kpatsa* dance, the *Kpanlogo* dance of the Ga people and the *Borborbor* dance of the Wedome-Ewe. The circumstances surrounding the death of the departed soul determines the colour of funeral costumes. Generally, black is the accepted colour for funerals as it signifies mourning in the Ghanaian context. However, if the deceased died naturally at an age above eighty years, the colour of the funeral costumes must be white. In this case the significance of the white colour is to turn the event more or less into celebration rather than mourning. However, if the departed person died as a result of accident or was killed in a war, the costumes must be red in colour to signify the community's grief in responding to any form of bloodshed. Also, some ethnic groups do not bury their dead bodies outside their home land. This means Ghanaians in the diaspora are sometimes faced with the challenge of transporting a dead body back to Ghana for burial.

Apart from dances mentioned above, there are many other Ghanaian dance types that perform different functions in the lives of the people. There are War dances that signify the employment of military culture by the various ethnic groups in ensuring total security of their community and its values. In the military culture, the dance repertoire, among other things, assumes the responsibility for the emotional and spiritual preparedness of the population for battle. Through the text, texture and choreography of dance, the military valour and skill (prowess) of ancestral heroes are invoked in exhorting their descendants to emulate. Ghanaian war dances include; *Atsiagbekor* of the Anlo-Ewe, *Asafo* of the Akan, *Djera* of the Gonja and *Kundum* of the Nzema.

There are also Cult/Religious/Ritual dances that are used in the performance of devotional activities for the divinities and the development of principles of a divine or moral state of living, which ranks at the top of the Ghanaian hierarchy of values. These dances do not allow non members to participate except on special occasions such as funeral celebrations of departed members. Examples are; *Yewe* dance of the Anlo-Ewe, *Akom* dance of the Akan and *Kpledzo* dance of the Ga people in Accra.

The social life of Ghanaians is mainly characterised by the formation of dance clubs as publicly organised leisure time activities. Dances created by these clubs are called social dances. Examples include; *Gota* of the Anlo-Ewe, *Kpatsa* of the Dangbe, *Sikyi* of the Fante, *Toura* of the Dagomba and *Gome* of the Ga people.

Ghanaians have Royal Dances that are performed in the palace of Kings, Chiefs and Queen mothers. It is the prerogative of the royals to form groups that perform such dances. Royal dances include; *Afli* of the Anlo-Ewe, *Fontomfrom* of the Ashanti and the Akwapem. Most royal dances are performed as solo pieces as the traditional norms do not allow group dancing.

The main aim of establishing the Arts Council of Ghana was to foster, improve and preserve the traditional arts and culture of Ghana<sup>2</sup>. Therefore it is assumed that the formation of the Ghana Dance Ensemble was in line with such objectives. The questions about whether or not these aims have been achieved over half a century after Ghana's independence point to the political instability of this West African nation between 1966 and 1981. I will now look at the chronology of military regimes that dominated Ghanaian political landscape during the above period.

## **6.7. Military Regimes**

On 24th February 1966, the government of Dr. Nkrumah was overthrown by the Ghana armed forces and the police in a coup d'état "while he was on his way to Vietnam" (Botwe-Asamoah 2005, 29). The coup's leader Colonel Kwashie Kotoka, an Anlo-Ewe was later assassinated at the Accra International Airport on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1967. His assassination remarkably changed the name of the air port to Kotoka International Airport. A National Liberation Council (NLC) was formed headed by Lt. General Joseph Arthur Ankrah, from the Ga ethnic group to administer the country.

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<sup>2</sup> Arts Council of Ghana Mandate, 1959.

General Ankrah was removed from office in April 1969 by Lt. General Akwasi Amankwa Afrifa, who became the Chairman of the NLC, which later gave way to a three-man Presidential Commission with General Afrifa as chairman. The Commission paved the way for a general election in 1969 which brought into power the Progress Party government, with Dr. Kofi Abrefa Busia<sup>3</sup> as Prime Minister and Mr. Edward Akufo Addo as president- both leaders are from the Akan ethnic group.

The Ghana armed forces again took over the reins of government on 13th January 1972, and Colonel (later promoted himself to General) Ignatius Kutu Acheampong became the Head of State and Chairman of the National Redemption Council (NRC). The name of the NRC was later changed to the Supreme Military Council (SMC). General Acheampong was replaced by General F.W.K. Akuffo in a palace coup in July 1978- again these two leaders belong to the Akan ethnicity.

The SMC was overthrown on 4th June 1979, in a mass revolt of junior officers and men of the Ghana armed forces. Following the uprising, an Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) was set up under the chairmanship of Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings, an Anlo-Ewe from the Volta

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<sup>3</sup> A Ghanaian intellectual who trained at Oxford University in Britain and became professor of Sociology and African Studies. As leader of the opposition against Kwame Nkrumah, he fled the country on the grounds that his life was under threat. In 1959 Busia became a Professor of Sociology and Culture of Africa at the University of Leiden near the Hague, Netherlands. From 1962 until 1969 he was a Fellow of St Antony's College, Oxford. He returned to Ghana in March 1966 after Nkrumah's government was overthrown by the military, and was appointed as the Chairman of the National Advisory Committee of the NLC. (See Botwe-Asamoah, 2005).

Region. The AFRC carried out what is better known as “house-cleaning exercise” in the armed forces and society at large, while restoring a sense of moral responsibility and the principle of accountability and probity in public life. The AFRC was in office for only three months and, in pursuance of a programme already set in motion before the uprising, allowed general elections to be held. On 24th September 1979, the AFRC handed over power to the civilian administration of Dr. Hilla Limann, leader of the People's National Party which had won the elections.

In the wake of the continuing downward plunge of the country, the Limann administration was overthrown on 31st December 1981, ushering in a new revolutionary era of far-reaching reforms and rehabilitation at all levels. Flt. Lt. Rawlings became the Chairman of a nine-member Provisional National Defence Council, (PNDC) with Secretaries of State in charge of the various ministries being responsible to the PNDC. Jerry John Rawlings later won two democratic elections after returning the country to civilian rule and finally handed over in January, 2001.

Interestingly, over two decades after Ghana had ended military rule and assumed Western democratic dispensation, crisis still exists in governance which directly or indirectly affects development of dance and the Ghanaian arts in general. Responding to Euro-American views on crisis of governance in Africa, Murungi (2004) opposes Western propositions as to how such crisis must be terminated. He argues that where African studies programmes in the academy have now become the lens through which the crisis of governance in Africa can be examined, “there is a Euro-American lens and there is African lens” (2004, 10). Murungi identifies the

difference between the two lenses as located in how the crisis is experienced, stressing that the Africans experience the crisis directly while the Euro-Americans experience it indirectly. The underpinning principle of this argument is the notion that those who are not close to a particular problem and therefore do not understand its characteristics must not be the right people to offer a solution. This echoes my argument that African problems are more likely to be resolved by African indigenous knowledge than the use of imported Western expertise that is not compatible with African cultures. "The academic imperative in Africa is not only different from the academic imperative in Euro-American world but also the two imperatives may be in conflict with each other" (Murungi 2004, 10).

The chronology of events enumerated above provides an option with which I will proceed to look at the development of dance in Ghana within two time frames under two different leaders. Ghana under Kwame Nkrumah (1957 to 1966); and Ghana under Jerry John Rawlings (1981-2001). I will not be discussing development of dance in Ghana during the period from 1967 to 1980 simply because of the political instability that resulted from the frequent military takeovers I have enumerated above; and so not much happened in the area of development of dance and its related arts.

#### **6.8. Development of Dance under the Leadership of Nkrumah**

Transmission of knowledge in Ghanaian dance and the related arts during the immediate post colonial era became a deliberate and conscious move by Nkrumah to Africanise or domesticate

Ghanaians. In other words, Nkrumah's move was to create awareness for Ghanaians to see the need to appreciate and use their local materials that can be found in their indigenous culture to develop the nation. Botwe-Asamoah (2005) remarks, "But for Nkrumah, the new political consciousness he inculcated in the people of Ghana was the consciousness of a distinctly African identity, unity and ideology" (2005, 29). If there was any means through which Ghana could regain its socio-political, cultural and economic power in order to be self reliant, the Ghanaian leader believed it had so much to do with the arts. Dance, regarded as the holistic form of all arts in Ghana became the focus of this crucial endeavour. My research participants explained why dance should be the main activity of this important national mission. Michael Attipoe, who is the current director of finance and administration at the National Commission on Culture states:

In Ghana, there are ten different regions all over the country and these regions are full of diverse ethnic groups. What is more important is that these ethnic groups have their various dance forms that serve as a document containing their cultural knowledge and history (Attipoe, 2011).

While Attipoe's view underscores the importance of dance in the various Ghanaian local communities, it is relevant to question the rationale behind the colonial ideologies that sought to vilify dance and its related practices. Of course if Ghanaian dance as a bodily expression was immoral and evil as colonisers were preaching at the time, one wonders why British society embraced this 'immoral' art when it was introduced in London by Philip Gbeho in the 1930s. These are some of the issues that propelled Nkrumah's concept into setting up a system of dance education in the Ghanaian rural and local communities. Under this system, the few artists who were employed as music and dance specialists at the Arts Council of Ghana were tasked to go to the various local communities for the purpose of helping in the training and education of the

local youth in their indigenous music and dance. In the late 1950s and early 1960s these local cultures continued to evolve; and it was feasible that unity could be achieved by harnessing them into a national culture in the face of the diversity.

According to Anlo-Ewe tradition keepers, dance education in the local communities used the various local languages that were well spoken and understood by the local people as the medium of instruction; and this was supported by demonstration technique well guided by vocalisation of music/drum language of the people. The big question is what language would be the medium of instruction for the national culture? At this juncture, it may be enlightening to realise that in the face of all negative attributes of British colonisation, one can honestly and clearly see the English Language as an element of evidential value of at least one positive attribute of colonisation. The English language, although imposed on Ghanaians, has helped significantly as a unifier with which communication in the whole country is easy, fast and effective. Having said that, it is more illuminating to take a close look at the massive destruction this single positive attribute has caused to Ghanaian knowledge systems over many decades due to the error of its use, not only as a superior language but also in most cases, many Ghanaians have totally replaced their mother tongue with English consciously or unconsciously.

The situation in Ghana today positions education as concentrated solely on knowledge of English. Critical minds would ask, what is education? I will define education from my Africanist perspective as a process of creating awareness in people simply into empowering them with tools for solving their problems including socioeconomic ones. In my view, education must be



understood as the art of cultivating the moral, emotional, physical, psychological and spiritual dimensions of developing an individual, a group or a nation.

Through this holistic education, dance as an art form empowers individuals, groups, communities and nations with the necessary information to enable them to have easy access to keys that will open their socioeconomic developmental doors. Kumodzie (2009) in discussing Ghana's problem in education explains, "The educational curriculum for the youth must be strictly based on the knowledge system of the people. Every educational review must be done on the bases of this knowledge system" (Kumodzie 2009, 11). Despite this orientation from Kumodzie and other Ghanaian personalities including myself<sup>4</sup>, Ghana still relies on the use of imperialistic ideologies that dominated their education in the colonial era. The result of this rigid system is the fact that people's acquisition of knowledge is measured according to the level of fluency they display in English.

In another example, Ghanaian basic schools have accepted a rigid and abstract system of education and still continue to follow its conventions such as the use of the letter 'A' to refer to apple in the teaching of the English alphabets knowing very well that Ghanaians do not grow apples in their land. The question is that if learners especially, children are being taught with teaching/learning materials they cannot see, feel and touch, how then does that become a process of giving awareness? How does that become education? Sadly, these are the factors that separate

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<sup>4</sup> In July, 2011, I made a call to the Ghana Education Service to reevaluate their current teaching tools, materials and techniques that I consider as inappropriate. (<http://www.ketunorth.ghanadistricts.gov.gh/?arrow=nws&read=42392>). (See also Ghana News Agency GNA).

Ewe/Ghanaian youths from their indigenous knowledge that is well embedded in music and dance. The Ghanaian situation is analogous to a man who is chronically sick and does not know the cause of his sickness; and probably expects death to save him from the predicament.

Kumodzie (2009) argues that knowledge is widely regarded as the power of existence and the key to unlock doors into the mysteries of nature. Indeed, acquisition of knowledge may culminate into a supreme authority capable of resolving the world's most life threatening problems. While Kumodzie's argument may be relevant to the Ghanaian situation, the important point is how the right knowledge is acquired and used in community development given the diverse cultures of the world today. This may not provide a level playing field for all societies as each culture differs from another and so do their developmental needs; and this requires varied forms of methods and tools in acquiring the required knowledge for developing the various societies. In this light, it may be argued that, the knowledge requirement for building Europe may not be the same as the required knowledge for building Africa. More closely, it is important to realise that the developmental knowledge for building Britain cannot be the same knowledge required for developing Ghana. In specific terms as related to this research, Anlo-Ewe knowledge which is the key to the developmental doors of Anloland has been stored in dance and this is the only knowledge compatible with the life and culture of the people.

Contact with foreign cultures may be seen as one of the ways a society could examine, enrich and challenge its indigenous knowledge for the purpose of constructing a better future. At the same time, it may be seen as one of the ways people's indigenous knowledge could be tempered

with, negatively manipulated and in the worst case, neglected. In the case of the Anlo-Ewe, dance, the store house of their developmental keys has never had the required scholarship to create awareness about its importance. The little amount of scholarly work on this group of Ghanaians has been done by foreigners through the lens of tools and techniques that are not always compatible to the Anlo-Ewe culture. The result is the inability of such foreign/Western technique oriented works to represent the Anlo-Ewe effectively. Also, we need to be aware that the multidisciplinary nature of the field of dance studies today especially, about the Anlo-Ewe forms, demands the use of theories from such disciplines as education, psychology, sociology, medicine, anthropology, politics, history, economics, philosophy and cultural studies.

Nkrumah may have laid a strong foundation but unfortunately could not complete his work before he was overthrown. His remarkable legacy has been the concept of cultural emancipation proposed out of his Pan-African ideology which eventually became a strong pillar against which the whole continent of Africa once leaned. As mentioned earlier, in 1962, the School of music, drama and dance was established at the University of Ghana; and this was the same year Ghana Dance Ensemble was formed. There were local and national festivals of music, dance, arts and culture that were celebrated annually to showcase the cultural heritage of Ghana as well as harnessing the creative potential of young people, the youths and the entire citizenry. The next session discusses the continuation of Nkrumah's work by Jerry John Rawlings who ruled Ghana for two decades.

## 6.9. Ghana under Jerry Rawlings

Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings took the initiative to re-examine Nkrumah's vision and ideologies and in the end the country saw significant improvement in arts and culture. For example, The National Theatre was built under Rawlings' regime in 1992 which provides excellent facilities for the development of Ghanaian arts, especially dance. This Theatre currently holds three professional companies: The National Dance Company, the National Symphony Orchestra and the National Theatre Players. It also houses a youth dance company called Dance Factory. In 1994 one of my early choreographic pieces called *Misego*<sup>5</sup> was given audience at the National Theatre and the dancers and musicians were pupils from Elim cluster of Schools in Madina, Accra, where I worked as a dance teacher for five years before proceeding to University of Ghana to study dance as a discipline.

It is very important to state here that in 1992, the building of the National Theatre also caused the National Dance Company to split into two. Currently Ghana has two national dance companies, one at the National Theatre and the other at the University of Ghana, Legon. Students, lecturers and researchers with whom I worked at the University of Ghana revealed that politicians ordered the National Dance Company to leave the university campus for the newly built National Theatre but Nketiah and Opoku, the founders, rejected the idea, arguing that the group's attachment to the Institute of African Studies was the best way to realise the academic and research goals of its establishment. As the confusion intensified, some members accepted some incentives and left the

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<sup>5</sup> An adaptation of Anlo-Ewe dance *misego* which was used in a trick of deception during their escape from Nortsie. It simply means tighten your belt and this performance, which represent a documented history of the Anlo-Ewe sojourn, also serves as a dance type that constantly reminds the people about the need to prepare well before engaging in an endeavour.

campus while those loyal to Nketia and Opoku remained at the university. Dance scholar Krista Fabian's study (1996) on The Ghana Dance Ensemble summarises it below:

The Ghana Dance Ensemble continued its role as the professional, national dance company of Ghana until 1994, when Dr. Abdallah, Minister of Education and Culture, in an attempt to draw the spotlight onto himself and his country's dance, tried to get the company to leave its home at the Institute of African Studies and move to the newly built National Theatre. Opoku and Nketia, standing firm in their belief that the company must be linked to an educational institution, refused to move, in spite of the lure of financial rewards (Fabian, 1996, 47).

While Opoku and Nketia deserve the highest commendation for insisting that the Ghana Dance Ensemble remained with the academic institution to which it was attached, the assumption is that the founders' argument was in line with plans to advance scholarship in dance. Michael Attipoe in an interview stated, "The University made such a strong point that those members of the Ghana Dance Ensemble who believed in scholarship remained at the University and others who believed in stage performance moved to the newly built National Theatre" (Attipoe, 2011). Narratives about the split of the Ghana Dance Ensemble such as those listed above are not clear on numbers but investigation by this research suggests that about seventy percent of the members moved to the National Theatre while thirty percent remained in the University at Legon.

Although the two groups still stand as a national identity company of Ghana, they bear different names, different choreographic conventions, and different artistic directors; and more importantly they have different funders. The group at the University carries the name Ghana Dance Ensemble and receives funding from the University through the Institute of African

Studies. The other group at the National Theatre bears the name National Dance Company of Ghana and receives funding from the Government through Ministry of Chieftaincy and Culture. Wages for the members of both groups are however the same although they come from different sources. Also, they sometimes collaborate especially during special performance programmes such as independence celebrations, national festivals and other state functions.

Dance performance and practice have gone on in Ghana fairly well in that amateur groups sprang up in the country very quickly. One such group is *Sankofa* which took Ghanaian dance to Britain in 1974. While this could be considered as a significant development of dance in practice and performance, it is necessary to examine dance education and its scholarship in Ghana over the years.

#### **6.10. Dance as an Academic Discipline in Ghana**

Dance in Ghana was expected to begin receiving academic treatment as far back as 1962 with the establishment of the school of Music Drama and Dance at the University of Ghana, Legon in Accra. Adinku notes,

The study and development of various aspects of the creative culture was assigned to the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana in October, 1962. Within the Institute of African Studies was the School of Music and Drama whose research fellows were charged by Government with the responsibility of carrying out research and offering instruction in the traditional performing arts, as well as establishing processes for the development of new art forms based on traditional models. Dance development and education played a significant role in the school

of Music and Drama under the supervision of Professor J. H. Nketia and Professor A. M. Opoku (Adinku, 1994, 1).

A critical response to the above citation would focus on the term 'creative culture'. This has been partially addressed by Adinku through Nketia's explication which states that, "the term creative culture has a definition which includes literature, visual arts and performing arts" (Nketia 1976, 3). Therefore, dance as a holistic form could be seen as the embodiment of the creative culture of Ghanaians and as such deserves the needed support and encouragement to achieve the above purpose as enumerated by Adinku's study. While it is evidently clear that performance aspect of dance development in Ghana has made a significant stride, its education and scholarship is still struggling to make any impact. Let us now look at some of the factors that challenge dance education and scholarship in Ghana.

#### **6.11. 'Dondology' and Stigma**

In Britain, dance scholarship began in the 1970s, a decade after Ghana's national dance company was formed and attached to academic and research institution. Britain's education reform (1988) locates dance as a course in the school curriculum though it must be made clear that this location was at first within the Physical Education programme. At least, the above reforms had given dance a space in the school curriculum although there is always a challenge of justifying the rationale for its inclusion. As Graham McFee (2004) explains, "Wherever dance is located, if it is to have a rationale, its rationale must be different from the rationale of other aspects of the school

curriculum" (2004, 2). McFee's assertion may well have articulated the growing problem of nations not giving a fair treatment to dance/arts in their various school curricula.

The concern here is that Ghana, an African nation whose knowledge foundation was stored in dance has neglected this holistic form by not including it in the basic school curriculum. Although Nkrumah's effort of introducing it at the university level could be considered as some level of achievement, the lack of its inclusion in basic schools and secondary schools undermined its full success due to the lack of foundation upon which the university dance education must stand. As a result, studying dance at the university level in Ghana became unattractive, disrespected and often considered by non-dance students as a discipline without a future. As challenging as the situation may appear, one cannot readily fathom the root cause except to link it to the fact that dance in Ghana was seen as being sufficiently important in the everyday life of people.

All of the above derogatory features culminated together into a local terminology called *Dondology*<sup>6</sup> which became a huge stigma attached to dance as an academic discipline in Ghana. The term derives from *Dondo/Dono* (the hour glass talking drum) and its music and dance. The colonial legacy that considered Ghanaian music and dance as acts of paganism, heathenism and barbarism dominated the post independence era of Ghana particularly in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

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<sup>6</sup> Ghanaian derogatory terminology that refers to the study of Music and Dance at a university level. The term, when applied to a student, automatically renders that student as a lower class fellow who has no clerical skills and cognitive advancement. It is widely used as an insult to all dance students.



My experience as a dance student at the university was a nightmare in the 1990s. This stigma attached to the dance course grew very high and most of my colleagues refused to publicly disclose their course of study. Here is a course which was supposed to be the repository of indigenous knowledge that is compatible with the people and needed to be employed by other academic disciplines in the process of education. Sadly, the seekers of this knowledge are rather mocked, insulted and considered as people with limited intellect. In view of the fact that some of us were not only studying dance but also we were practising in public, there was no way to hide our student departmental identity and the only thing we could do was to bear the insults and perhaps try to attach some positive propensity to the term 'dondology'.

As I can recall, a colleague student who was studying Business Administration said to me jokingly, "When you come to university, you study a course that will make you financially independent in order to command respect from society. The worst thing to do is to come to university with the aim of studying to become a dondologist."<sup>7</sup> While some dance students considered such derogatory statements as unbearable and in some cases changed their courses to enable them to leave dance, others who were passion driven considered it as a challenge that needed to be endured in order to find a solution.

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<sup>7</sup> Business Administration student at University of Ghana who happened to be the room mate of the researcher in 1998.

## **6.12. Contents of Dance Course at the University Level**

In a discussion of dance on Ghana National Television in the spring of 2010, the television presenter Gifty Anti suggested that the marginalisation confronting dance as a discipline and its students in the university may be due to the poor packaging of the course content (Anti, 2010). While many Ghanaians share Anti's view, I disagree simply because the problem appears to be a huge ignorance rather than an innocent course package. At this juncture it may be useful to examine the course content of dance at the University of Ghana.

As mentioned earlier, Adinku's study makes us understand that dance education at the university level began in 1962 at a certificate level and later moved to Diploma level in 1965. According to Adinku (1994), courses in the Final Examination for the Certificate in Dance were divided into two groups namely, Written Papers and Practical Examination. Adinku tabulates the written papers as: Introduction to Movement Analysis and Notation, Studies in African Dance Forms and Theory of Music. The practical Examination consists of Exercises and Reading in Labanotation Texts, Studies in African Dance Forms and Composition of Dance based on Studies in African Movements (Adinku 1994, 8). See also University of Ghana, Regulations and Syllabus (1969, 11).

Although this does not specifically give us what particular dances were taught under the various modules, Adinku provides a list of teachers and lecturers with their teaching areas which might give us the idea of which Ghanaian dances were being studied at the university at the time. The

list of lecturers and teachers include: Kwabena Nketia- African Dance Forms, Drama in African Societies, Ghanaian Folklore, and Traditional African Songs; Mawere Opoku-Labanotation, African Dance Forms, Movement Aspects of Customary Behaviour and Choreography. Grace Nuamah- Akan Dance and Songs; Seth Kobla Ladzekpo- Ewe Dance and Songs (1994, 8).

With the above list one could see clearly that the certificate course in what was termed 'Traditional African Dance' was offering dances from only two Ghanaian ethnic groups (Akan and Ewe) which raises issues of representation. Also, the two ethnic groups do not constitute the whole nation of Ghana and therefore one would have expected the name of the course to be nothing more than Akan and Ewe Dance Studies. Interestingly, the name assumed national identity and went beyond that to assume a continental status. While this blunder could be counted as one of the factors that challenged dance education at the university level in the beginning it is important to understand the difficulties involved in trying to design a curriculum model for a discipline that has never received any appreciation in the midst of a diversity of cultures. Besides that, issues of generalisation were not so much of a concern in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; and also dances from the two Ghanaian ethnic groups may have been selected to be used as a pilot project to build a foundation for the rest of the groups. There may be other issues including the criteria used in selecting Akan and Ewe dances but this is a clear case, totally different from that of the National Dance Company. While forming a dance company may be a matter of dancers, teaching of dance needs teachers with both dancing and teaching skills and the Ghanaian situation at the time appeared to be the lack of such expertise in other groups apart from the two selected. My interviews with some retired members of the dance teaching staff

including Seth Asare Newman suggest that while the availability of teaching expertise was essential, the popularity of the dances was a factor of consideration in the selection process.

At the Diploma level, more lecturers and instructors were brought on board from both within the country and abroad. Adinku's study lists those from abroad as follows: Deborah Bertonoff from Israel-Movement/Dance Technique; Drid-Williams from USA-Principles of Choreography, Dance History and Criticism, Modern Dance Technique; Odette Blum from USA-Labanotation, Modern Dance Technique; N. Z. Nayo-Theory of Music. Ghanaian teachers included Sophia D Lokko-Dance and Theatre; B. S. Kwakwa-English Language; and Ama Aidoo-English Language. Special skill instructors included drummers such as Iddrisu Alhassan-Dagbani Music; J Asmah-Ahanta Music; John Bennisan -Togo-Ewe Music; Husunu Afadi-Anlo-Ewe Music; Mustapha Tettey Addy-Ga-Adagme Music; Osei Bonsu- Ashanti Music; and Kwesi Badu-Ashanti Music (1994, 9).

The above combination of expertise enriched the programme so much that courses for the final examination for the Diploma in Dance according to Adinku (1994) were grouped in three sessions namely, Written Papers, Practical and Research and writing. The inclusion of Research and Writing in the Diploma course underscores the full intent of the School of Dance Music and Drama to advance scholarship into the Ghanaian performing arts, especially dance. Let us now see the course content of the three modules under the Diploma Course. Written Papers included: Movement Analysis I (Labanotation), Movement Analysis II (African Dance Forms), Dance

History and Criticism, Choreography (Principles of Choreography), Dance and Theatre, and Music. Practical segment involved; Dictation and Sight Reading Test in Labanotation, Assignment in Notating African Dance, Performance and Choreography. Research and Writing component comprises of a minor thesis based on original research in African Dance forms (1994, 11). See also University of Ghana, Regulation and Syllabus, (1969, 13).

Out of these three segments of the Diploma course, Research and Writing was expected to establish a foundation with a technique compatible to Ghanaian arts for the advancement of scholarship in dance. However, when you look at its nature critically, it simply appears to have absolutely no focus. Indeed if students are allowed to write a minor thesis based on original research in African dance forms without giving them the boundaries within which to operate, they may base their researches and their findings on mere generalisations. The question is why do we use Ghanaian materials to educate students and yet fail to attribute that to Ghana? Or better, why are we in such a quick geometrical rush to represent a whole continent when we haven't even identified what is in our immediate environment? Adinku explains, "Materials for the students' training were drawn from traditional sources and so they became interested in dance as an element of culture" (1994, 12). The point is this, culture has to do with people and once the students were studying dance as an element of culture, it would be prudent to keep these students' attention on a particular ethnic group in Ghana rather than commissioning a research into a whole continent by Diploma students. These and many other errors denied Ghana the opportunity to develop a Ghanaian/African frame work within which scholars and practitioners of African arts must operate. Regardless of the above, the school continued to run only Diploma

courses until 1994 when Adinku's proposal for the teaching of Dance at a Bachelor of Arts (BA) level was considered. Soon after the introduction of the BA degree in dance, Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) degree followed in the beginning of the new millennium. Currently, the University of Ghana delivers the above two undergraduate degrees in dance and two postgraduate programmes, Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degree and Master of Philosophy (M Phil) degree in dance. I will now proceed to examine the techniques and tools including the facilities that are available for employment in the successful delivery of the above programmes at the University of Ghana.

#### **6.13. Tools, Techniques and Infrastructure**

There is no standard technique in the teaching of African music and dance at the University of Ghana even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, this research has gathered that all teachers and lecturers have designed their own approaches that help them to deliver their lessons successfully. In 2010 and 2011, this research conducted fieldwork in the university environment purposely on the teaching and learning of Anlo-Ewe dances. During this exercise, many dance classes were observed out of which I present here a Dance Technique session delivered by Mr. Seth Asare Newman to seventy-five undergraduate students in the Dance Hall of the Dance department in the morning from 9.30am to 10.30am. As a usual practice, the teacher began the session with a registration exercise which saw the students respond to their names mentioned one after the other.

The real teaching began with recorded Christian music playing in the background while the teacher stood in front of the students demonstrating movements as a way of improvisation to the music. These movements were selected moves and gestures from Ghanaian ethnic dances and grouped in a unique way that responds rhythmically to the Christian Music in the background. The students, who dressed in black tights and white T-shirts worked collectively as a class in copying movements executed by their teacher while maintaining their dancing space without any slightest move of travel (See figures 33 and 34 below). This segment lasted for about fifteen minutes with the students enjoying the exercise.

In the next segment, students formed eight straight lines and travelled with movements across the floor with their teacher in front, still dictating to the learners what movement to do at a particular time. The last segment known as combination was a set of movements the teacher put together as a choreographic piece. From this choreographic piece, the teacher delivered movements one after the other to their students each time they met with the hope that students would have completed the whole piece by the end of the semester.

The above scenario may be termed as Asare-Newman technique. As more indigenous as this technique appears even in the academic environment, there is the need for an inquiry into its origin. In my interview with Asare-Newman, the dance lecturer states:

When I started, I didn't know it would grow and become a big thing today. It was simply my own passion for Ghanaian traditional dance that pushed me to pursue it further. This started in the era where Christian groups rejected traditional dances

but as a Christian, I defied those rules and educated the Christian community about the importance of dance in the Christian faith (Asare Newman, 2011).

First of all, there is the need to locate the context of Asare-Newman's dance teaching and practice. Asare Newman is known in Ghanaian circles as the first Christian dance practitioner who choreographed traditional Ghanaian dances with movements rejected by Christian churches as a new piece. Asare Newman's unique style of using Christian music to accompany his choreographic pieces full of traditional dance movements broke the barrier between dance and Christianity in Ghana. Before I discuss his technique, I would like to consider the five factors McFee identified as general constraints in dance teaching and dance practice. These are; the position of the particular teaching, the methods of delivering the dance programme, morality of methods of teaching, effectiveness of methods of delivery and the possibility of assessing the learners' work (2004, 155-156). Applying McFee's observation to Asare Newman's technique reveals the level of constraints involved in the whole process of learning.

The teacher may be credited for using his dance practice to educate his fellow Christians but when it comes to a school environment, teaching and learning must not be done on religious lines. The Christian music that dominates his teaching practice every day may be a source of inspiration for him but this can also be a violation of some students' religious rights. In other words can this method of delivery be qualified as morally appropriate? Supposing Muslims, Buddhists or Traditional believers among the students demand for their own faith based music in the process of learning dance, what will be the reaction of the teacher? But incredibly, the whole



dance lesson went on successfully without any issues from the students although this does not mean there were no issues of sensitivities.

Secondly, the class went on successfully solely through the observation and participation technique without any vocal instruction coming from the teacher. While this approach reveals dance as a non-verbal art form, it also underscores absolute absence of teacher –student interaction in the process. Students may be concentrating much more on following the right movement patterns and their levels and clarity rather than discussing with their teacher those elements that go into the correct execution of the movement.

Class participation started very well in the beginning but this began receiving frequent interruptions as the class progressed. The dance hall that was constructed to take care of about twenty students was the same space available for all the seventy-five students. Adinku's (1994) proposal for teaching some dance courses such as Bachelor of Arts degrees failed to include infrastructural adjustments. When the proposal was accepted, students were admitted in their numbers without any recommendation on infrastructural expansion and as a result, hundreds of students still struggle to share the same facilities that were taking care of about sixty students.



32. Arare Newman leads his technique class.



33. Students in Newman technique.

### **6.15. Versions of Ghanaian Dance**

There are many versions of dance in Ghana today. First, there is what is called “traditional” version, second, there is the national version also known as Opoku version, there is the academic version and also there are amateur creative versions.

### **6.16. Traditional Version**

This is what is considered as an undiluted or ‘original’ body expression that can be found in only the local communities where the dance originated<sup>8</sup>. Dances that fall under the traditional version are not considered as commodities for sale with the expectation of receiving monetary reward. They are so much viewed as embodiment of shared ideas and meanings simply constituting the knowledge system of the people. Although they provide room for adjustment to cope with the change in development, they still maintain a set of rules and regulations observed by their practitioners. It was the only one that existed in Ghana before the formation of the Ghana Dance Ensemble in 1962. Arguably, this version falls under the German scholar Felix Hoerburger’s (1968) theory of first existence stage. Hoerburger divided folk dance into what he called a first and second existence. First existence dances are ones that grew from within, are useful to a community, and are performed in a culturally appropriate context. Second existence dances include those choreographed for either recreational or theatrical purposes, performed out of the

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<sup>8</sup> Although the notion of original does not exist in contemporary scholarship, the Anlo-Ewe tradition keepers insist that it is the version that can be found only in their native soil. It is however arguable that what they refer to as original has gone through changes over time and therefore may have lost some of the qualities that make it ‘original’. Also, what they call traditional is being influenced by contemporary society and its technological advancement of creativity.

original context by individuals who may or may not be the descendants of the ancestral performers.

#### **6.17. Opoku Version or National Version**

Mawere Opoku's choreographic versions to represent the various ethnic groups during the creation of national identity through the formation of Ghana Dance Ensemble in 1962 has been highly regarded as the national version of Ghanaian dance. The national version can be found in the stage performances of the Ghana Dance Ensemble. It is a constructed one with much input from the custodians of the various ethnic dances all over the country. Although this is a created version, Opoku who is credited for it did very well to keep some traditional rules and regulations as part of it. This version is a good example of Hoerburger's second stage dance.

#### **6.18. Academic Version**

A simplified version of Opoku's creation which is taught at the universities (University of Ghana, Legon in Accra; Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi; University of Cape Coast; and University of Education in Winneba). Opoku and Nketia share the credit for designing a simple choreographic adaptation of the various ethnic dances of Ghana. Creation of the academic version was based solely on the earlier choreographic pieces Opoku created for the Ghana Dance Ensemble.

### **6.19. Recreational Version**

Creative pieces put together by amateur dance groups (whose operational areas can be found in Accra and other cities of Ghana) to represent the various ethnic dances of Ghana are considered as recreational versions. They do not follow a particular convention. Neither do they follow any strict rules but they try to capture some indigenous movements of the people they represent.

Another significant move of the Rawlings administration was the upgrade of the arts council to National Commission on Culture, where every region in Ghana has an establishment called Centre for National Culture (CNC). Working for this establishment as a cultural officer in charge of dance for three years gave me the chance to experience dances from the local communities and also to gain a better understanding of the shared tradition of the people enshrined in their dance forms. However, it was clear to me that only those who have true passion for the arts perhaps seasoned artists are the only ones that can survive in that field due to the low income and lack of motivation for the young officers. It is obvious that although Nkrumah and the founders of Ghana had laid a foundation for the development of the arts, political interference coupled with lack of visionary leaders contributed immensely to the present stagnation in the development of Ghanaian dance in particular and the arts and culture in general.

Having given a detailed ethnographic account of one of the many dance traditions in Ghana and followed this by discussion of dance at the national level, I will now move to discuss Anlo-Ewe dance in the diaspora. Looking again at issues of representation one could argue that at a certain

level, the Anlo-Ewe dance does not represent the Anlo-Ewe culture, it simply is the culture. In contrast, it becomes a representation of the culture at the national level and more so internationally. The next chapter discusses Anlo-Ewe and Ghanaian dance in the diaspora under the broad term 'African dance' a sub division of 'Black dance' in Britain.

## **Chapter 7: Emergence and Reemergence of Black dance in Britain**

### **7.1. Introduction**

Britain is arguably one of the most diverse nations in the world. The diversity of cultures in Britain today could be attributed in part to a significant number of black people particularly African and Caribbean immigrants whose cultural elements including, music, dance, clothing, food, faith and religion have enriched the country. This chapter presents some observations arising from the emergence and reemergence of 'Black dance' and 'African dance' in Britain focusing on the critical analysis of the formation and operations of Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble, the Ghanaian traditional dance group whose over two decades of operations in Britain (1984-2005) could be seen as a significant contribution to cultural diversity and education in the country. The chapter raises issues of cultural representation as well as lack of in-depth documentation of the significant contribution of Adzido and African/Black arts to the development of Britain.

Political categorisation of these cultural forms under the general term Ethnic Minority Arts may be remarkable. However, when it comes to the acknowledgement of the impact made by dance companies to British society, these ethnic minority groups often become invisible on the list due to lack of documentation<sup>1</sup>. The chapter aims to create a new awareness of the relevance of such minority arts groups to the sustenance of the multiculturalism Britain enjoys today.

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<sup>1</sup> Although a book produced by Association of Dance of the African Diaspora (ADAD) titled Voicing Black Dance (2007) may be considered a useful text that contains a brief discussion of Adzido, this does not constitute an in-depth study like Christy Adair's book on Phoenix Dance Company titled, Dancing the Black Question (2007).

The arrival of ethnic minority arts in Britain has gradually added to the transformation of the country into a more diverse society – both ethnically and culturally. During the period between the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 21st centuries, particularly from the 1970s onwards, the contributions of people who have come to live in Britain have significantly enriched the country in the area of food, clothing, language, music and dance.

Immigration and ties with other countries appear to have resulted in a more dynamic economy with more competition for jobs, access to crucial skills and new ideas, better public services and, more significantly, a richer cultural life. Many of the Ghanaian immigrants I interacted with in Britain are nurses and bus drivers who work for the health service and the transport sector respectively. While the National Health Service (NHS) and Transport for London (TfL) may be credited for recruiting workers from outside Britain, the success of this exercise could be counted as one of the legacies left behind by the last Labour Government that may be considered ‘Ethnic Minority Friendly’ due to its fair policies on immigration that attracted business and skilled migrants from all corners of the globe. During this period ethnic minority arts including African music and dance were finally accepted and integrated into education and community activities in British society. Although ‘Black dance’ is not the focus of this study, for the purpose of this chapter, I will navigate through it as a broader term to find ‘African dance’ and Ghanaian dance within which Anlo-Ewe dance is located.



## 7.2. What is Black dance?

The term 'Black dance' can be confusing if not used contextually. Any attempt to define this term demands an explanation of the word 'Black', its origin and significance. According to former General Manager of Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble and dance officer of the Arts Council of England Hilary Carty (2007), the term 'Black' in a British context is used to identify African descendants and its usage extended to include "people who have a history of colonisation and oppression by the British-hence it being used to include Asian communities and even the Irish in some instances" (Carty 2007, 16). This suggests that the term 'Black' when used without qualification may invite generalisations and this has the potential of stereotyping people. Furthermore, it is too simplistic to assume that groups of people share the same ideals and personality traits just because their historical backgrounds have something in common. In view of the fact that the use of the term 'Black' is subjective and open to interpretation as articulated by Carty (2007), I will limit my scope to Africans and Caribbeans; and with reference to African Americans but certainly, without necessarily engaging with other parts of the Black Empire<sup>2</sup> in Britain.

'Black dance' according to the scope I set above is often used to describe a range of dance styles whose springs can be traced back to two main sources namely, African dance and the slave dances from the plantations of the West Indies. Dance historian, Rodreguez King- Dorset (2008)

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<sup>2</sup> Black empire in Britain refers to the different groups including Africans, Caribbeans, Asians and Irish people who were classified generally as Black people, often regarded as ethnic minorities. 20<sup>th</sup> century writings on the history of Black population in Britain such as James Walvin (1971, 1973) and Norma Myers (1986) are good examples of works that looked at the term black beyond colour and extended it to social class and economic status of the people.

characterises Black dance as a form culturally and biologically rooted in Africa. Looking at black as a category, King-Dorset declares:

Talking about blacks as a group may also be too much of a generalisation. Historically they have been made up of many groups. Nevertheless, there are general points that apply across the board to a wide variety of different groups. There are refutable exceptions but these are refutations to a general pattern that has persisted across cultural Africa for most of recorded history although the term Africa covers a large diverse and far from homogenous area (King-Dorset, 2008, 33).

Taking cue from King-Dorset's study which draws partly on historians like Folarin Shyllon and Simon Schama to validate the notion that the vast majority of black people who arrived in London between 1730 and 1850 were African slaves who were taken to the Caribbean, I will use the word Black to refer to people of African descent. Therefore, Black dance in the context of this chapter will refer to a dance form that draws on African cultural identity, philosophy and values. Using this term does not merely draw attention to its more encompassing nature, but also the complexities it carries. Dance scholars and practitioners including Peter Badejo (2006), Thomas De Frantz (2006), Andre Lepecki (2004), Rex Nettleford (1998) and Carl Paris (2008) have commented on these complexities and argued that Black dance is a meaningless term. For Nettleford, the misnomer of labeling African dance opportunistically as 'Black dance' presents among many problems the denial of aesthetic logic and cultural consistency. Similarly, Badejo argues that the term has become "so encompassing that it is meaningless in the sense that it represents a bleaching culture" (Badejo's voice in 2006 as captured and cited in Akalawu, 2007, 94). De Frantz has commented on the use of the term to describe stage dancing based on black social dance forms. He explains that black social dance refers to the unification of black popular music and movement through an approach characterised by such features as "allowance for individual expression with the group, repetition as intensification, strong reliance on breaks or

abrupt ruptures of the underlying beat and highly complex rhythmic structure” (De Frantz 2006, 102). Lepecki conceptualises black dance as a shared cultural and political heritage of the Africans in the diaspora, arguing that the term refers to “African diasporic dances performed and watched by other participating dancers” (Lepecki 2004, 161). Paris on the other hand considers the term black dance as a thorny topic in contemporary scholarship, stressing that “the term rapidly replaced the word ‘Negro’ largely taking on positive, subversive and self-affirming implications in black cultural parlance” (Paris 2008, 96).

The awareness created by the aforementioned arguments demands that the use of the term ‘Black dance’ in this thesis be put in a defined context in order to avoid some of the complexities. The work of Ukrainian dance scholar Andriy Nahachewsky (2011) makes us understand that every dance is unique and that even when a dance form is performed and repeated, the two performances cannot be the same. He states, “When we speak of any categories of dance, we have to remember that they are generalisations, abstractions and simplifications that we make for our own convenience” (Nahachewsky 2011, 6). Therefore, it is imperative to state clearly here that although the mention of Black dance may refer to African dance, its use in this work, considering its contentious nature, is to provide an umbrella term under which African dance is located, enabling me to navigate through Ghanaian dance, to narrow down on Anlo-Ewe dance, which is the focus of this research. Furthermore, it must be pointed out that the term Black dance has been, and is still, in use by individuals and therefore, it would be a remiss on my part to exclude it in my discussion. I am therefore using the term in an emic way with a passionate awareness of the problems and complexities it entails.

Considering the discussion in the previous chapter around the notion of Ghanaian dance, questions that may arise in response to this proposition include whether or not there is a single genre that could be employed to represent Africa; perhaps this, I suppose, is why any scholar who wants to do any meaningful discussion in this field would have to venture into a deeper understanding and appreciation of the complexities of the term 'African dance'.

### **7.3. Black as a Category**

It is very difficult to talk about the term 'Black' without triggering such elements as slavery, colonisation, struggle, freedom, survival and solidarity, which are very important in the history and culture of African people. It also invites such subjective themes such as 'Black is beautiful' and of course, one can talk about the Black Panthers or the Panther dance of Michael Jackson which I will be referring to later in this chapter. While Black may be seen as a unique category, what seems to challenge its positive propensity has been its historical background characterised by slavery and colonialism. Addressing issues of postcolonial nationalism and Jamaican identity politics, the dance historian Sabine Sorgel (2007) documents how conquerors in the 15<sup>th</sup> century who were more interested in trade than cultural exchange became slave traders. She writes,

Africans were captured, enslaved and shipped to the Caribbean in exchange for exclusive tropical goods, which at the end of the gruesome journey filled the plates and coffee cups of imperial Europe. Following the Portuguese slave trading presence on the African coastline since 1500, John Hawkins was the first English slave trader, who in 1562 captured 300 African slaves in Sierra Leone and sold them to Hispaniola (Sorgel 2007, 24-25).

Sorgel's study also reveals that an estimated 830,857 African slaves had been shipped to Jamaica between 1702 and 1808 to produce the wealth, pleasure and consumption of the British Empire

in the commercial products of tobacco, tea, coffee and sugar<sup>3</sup>. Based on the foregoing, Black has over the years been associated with barbarism and demeaning undertones that both insult and undermine Black people's intelligence and humanity. As Nelson Mbulaheni, the African linguistic expert, argues, African arts and literature today find themselves attempting to hold a positive mirror up to the Black people of the world, aiming to rectify the centuries-long negative portrayal of Black Africans by the Western world (Mbulaheni, 2008).

While slavery may be cited as one of the systems which produced a significant Black population in Britain, other forms of human migration can equally be accountable. These include economic migration where people relocated to Britain to work. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, the NHS and TfL were at a time the major recruiters. Other systems include education and training where people who were sent to further their education in Britain later found their upgraded skills useful to British society. We can also talk about marriage and family ties as well as religious systems, especially Christianity, which was imposed on the colonised; and the colonised people have arguably re-invigorated it and used in pushing away, if not a total suppression of, African traditional beliefs and values of the various African societies. Theologian and historian Anthony Reddie (2010), a descendant of one of those Black theologians, recounts his childhood experience of being treated as a foreigner by a local school, blind to the fact that the black little boy was born in England and spoke English with a strong Yorkshire accent. While the school authorities based their judgment solely on the boy's skin colour and went ahead, making derogatory remarks in his hearing, one could imagine the psychological trauma he and the few other black people in the country during the 1960s were exposed to. At the same time Black

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<sup>3</sup> See also Walvin (2001, 6).

theology could be seen as a movement in black people's fight for freedom, justice and equity.

Reddie argues:

For many Black people of the African diaspora, the quintessential quality of their black experiential engagement with Christianity has been the dialectical facet of juxtaposing the ordinary and the extraordinary in the one narrative frame. This struggle to fashion a utilitarian model of Christianity that is attuned to the existential struggles for justice and equity in this world has been the dominant *raison d'être* for the emergence and the continued existence of Black Theology (Reddie 2010, 5).

The issues surrounding the term 'Blackness' in relation to the arts have been in the public domain over the past six or more decades with human-rights and anti-racial activists, artists and other stake-holders engaged in several public debates to find a suitable meaning that would attach positive connotations to the term. Dance scholar Christy Adair, in 2007 summarised the debate on the term 'Blackness', using the experience of the Phoenix Dance Company in Britain as an example of a Black arts company that has experienced the stigma attached to Blackness over these years. In Dancing the Black Question (2007) Adair examines the formation and development of the Phoenix Dance Company from 1981 to 2001, using politics and cultural discourses to raise questions about dance history, dance structures, critical response and cultural identity. Her research produced many perceptions of Phoenix, thereby making the "history and legacy of the company a complex one over which a number of people have a sense of ownership" (Adair 2007, 21).

Indeed Adair's study reveals among other factors the marginalisation confronting Black dance and its practitioners (at the time period she studied) which stemmed from the often unfair representation of Black artists as one of their major setbacks. She cites a number of books that fully documented the work of White British and American artists and ignored the important

contribution of black British artists and African American artists. Walter Sorell's Dance in Its Time (1981) and Edward Thorpe's Black dance (1990) were among those cited. While Adair's focus is on contemporary dance, her research crosses borders to borrow elements from other dance forms, including traditional African dance.

Although the focus of this chapter is on Britain, for the purposes of looking at Black as a category, I will open up the horizon in order to examine how 'Black dance' has been perceived in America. Carty (2007) states, "Black is essentially a political term used in the United States during the civil rights movement to positively affirm the history and culture of African Americans" (Carty 2007, 16).

Brenda Dixon Gottschild, an African-American dance scholar, has explored the term Blackness as a category through a personalised cultural study into what she called the 'excavation of Africanist presence in performance'. In The Black Dancing Body (2003), Gottschild interrogates the Black dancing body through personal experiences, critical analysis of visual and print documentation and also through the viewpoints of twenty-four contemporary dance practitioners, including Trisha Brown, Bill T. Jones, Shelley Washington and Ralph Lemon, representing a variety of dance eras, idioms and traditions. As a person of African lineage, she has pursued her research on this concept in ways that are often considered very sensitive, due to the fact that they touch on racism, Blackness and use the somewhat essentialist terms 'Africanist' and 'Europeanist'. Her work fully articulates the representational elements of a Black body in

performance. Talking about the non acknowledgement of the African input in American dance, she refers to one of George Balanchine's ballets, 'The Four Temperaments', which

utilises Africanist characteristics, such as kicking rather than placing the leg extensions; allowing the pelvis to be pulled off-centre; flexing the hands and feet; letting the energy determine the form rather than the traditional ballet convention of letting form and the vertical aligned spine dictate the outlay of energy (Gottschild 2003, 21).

Her discussion also makes reference to the work of Kwame Anthony Appiah, a Ghanaian-American philosopher, who has called for the abandonment of the very concept of race, arguing that it is a biologically meaningless term that confuses socially-constructed systems and prejudice with biological heredity. Gottschild rejects the theory of Appiah, concluding that "we need to apply genetic theory from a different perspective to utilise it from a non-racialised starting point" (Gottschild 2003, 5). Although her groundbreaking work revels in controversy, aware as it is that its arguments will be challenged, she may be credited for establishing the term 'Africanist aesthetics' in the field of Dance Studies which enabled readers to look at the work of Balanchine, among others, from a different perspective.

The work of another African-American dance scholar Thomas F. DeFrantz, entitled, Dancing Many Drums (2002) explores the representational elements of African and Black dance and the influence it has had on American and world culture over the years. In a collection of essays on African American dance history, theory and practice he re-evaluates the terms 'Black' and 'African American' as both racial and dance categories. These studies emphasise the valid point that through dance, peoples' history and culture can be better understood; dance as a holistic art form embodies the cultural and historical experiences of the African people. Considering the fact



that these cultural and historical experiences constitute the knowledge foundation of Black and African people, scholars and practitioners need to be aware of the implications of trying to represent this complex knowledge without having regard for its guiding principles. It is evident that lack of understanding of the Black and African knowledge and its metaphysical elements has contributed greatly to the often negative portrayal of the Black/African people.

The work of V. Y. Mudimbe (1988) offers philosophical reflections on Africa's historical and cultural experiences. These include early Greco-Roman representations of Africa and its people; the beginning of the partitioning of Africa by Spain and Portugal in 1493; European exploration, colonisation, and representations of Africa. Mudimbe identifies three 'genres of speeches' that label the people and their knowledge as primitive. He argues,

In fact, from a more general historical frame, one can observe three complementary genres of "speeches" contributing to the invention of a primitive Africa: the exotic text on savages, represented by travelers' reports; the philosophical interpretations about hierarchy of civilizations; and the anthropological search for primitiveness. The complementarity of these speeches is obvious. It is perceived as a unity in the Western consciousness. The exotic text dominates in the seventeenth century. In the eighteenth century it compliments Enlightenment classifications of peoples and civilization. In the nineteenth century, an ideology of conquest appears in explorers' sagas, anthropologists' theories and the implementation of colonial policy. However, until the scramble for Africa, historical distinctions of genres can only be relative (Mudimbe, 1988, 69).

Mudimbe argues that early discourses on Africa failed to adopt the appropriate techniques for enabling them to capture intrinsic elements of the history and philosophy of the cultures of African people.

Having discussed briefly how the term 'Black dance' has so much to do with African and Caribbean forms, I will now narrow my discussion to focus on 'African dance' and its complexities.

#### **7.4. The Term 'African Dance' and its Complexities**

As a dancer, master drummer and general practitioner of a range of dance forms from the West African sub-region, my experience both in Africa and in Europe informs my belief that there is nothing more complicated than the term 'African dance'. If I had the opportunity to answer the question, 'What is African dance?' I would probably find it hard to formulate an answer that included all the elements of that category. Scholars and practitioners have attempted to discuss the intricacies of this vague term from their various ideological perspectives in order to simplify it. African American dance practitioner and anthropologist Pearl Primus, who regards African dance as the source, the well from which she drew inspiration for her creative work, notes:

Dance in Africa is not a separate art, but a part of the whole complex of living. Dance is only a part of the whole.... The ceremony is the complex. For the ceremony, the master artists carve and paint fantastic masks. The designers create strange and wonderful costumes. Geniuses draw music from everywhere. Dancers become filled with supernatural power (Primus 1998, 4).

Anthropologist Georgiana Gore (2001) looks at a segment called 'West African Dance' in a study that stems from a decade of experience in multicultural Nigeria; she emphasises the use of an evaluative/interpretive approach in discussing issues of representation. Her ethnographic research has produced 'authentic' materials, enabling her to measure contemporary discourses that contribute to the fallacy of perceiving African dance as a generic form in Europe. Gore (2001) cites an anonymous review of the Adzido Pan-African, English-based classical African dance company in Semple (1992). "For two and a half hours loud complex drum beats pound out

the story, the dancers smile constantly and display the kind of energy that would have an average aerobics class begging for mercy after ten minutes" (Gore 2001, 31). (See also Semple 1992, 26). There is no doubt that this review positions itself within a Eurocentric framework as identified by Gore. The main issue raised here touches on the need for the outside observer to go beyond simply viewing the steps, patterns, and rhythms of a dance and begin instead to look at the contexts in which dances are performed (Firenzi, 2012). I would therefore like to throw more light on what constitutes dance in Africa from an African standpoint. Dance scholar Tracey Snipe articulates how essential it is for practitioners and scholars to approach African dance from an "unbiased cultural and artistic perspective to know and understand the function of dance in African society" (Snipe 1998, 72). Understanding the functions of 'African dance' requires an understanding of the African philosophy of dance and of life. However, it would be inappropriate to view 'African dance' as a single genre, considering that Africa is a continent with fifty-seven different countries and diverse ethnic groups, each with their own unique cultural practices.

Being the second largest continent in the world with its people constituting about ten percent of the world's population, Africa has over one thousand indigenous languages spoken by various ethnic groups (Stone, 1998). Although these cultural practices continue to influence one another, thereby establishing similarities in various cultures, it is very difficult to single out one dance form as representative of African dance. It would be easier to say African dances instead and this would give us the flexibility to consider dances from more than one country. Even Ghanaian dance, Ugandan dance, Egyptian dance and South African dance are questionable categories, questionable because these countries are full of diverse cultural groups and therefore we cannot use a single dance form to represent the whole nation. In reality, to speak of 'African dance'

without qualification is to ignore the vast range of dance practices and traditions from which these dances developed. Gore echoed this point when she asserted that “expressions such as dance in West Africa or West African dances are shorthand terms, perhaps misleading and certainly misnomers, for talking of regionally circumscribed, local traditional practices of what is Eurocentrically called dance” (Gore 2001, 29).

In a book produced by the Association of Dance of the African Diaspora (ADAD) entitled Voicing Black Dance (2007), Funmi Adewole, one of the editors, recounts her experience as a guest lecturer at a dance conservatory in London. She expressed surprise at the fact that British dance students were able to share their knowledge of Black dance in America with the mention of names of individuals and companies such as Pearl Primus, Katherine Dunham, Alvin Ailey, the Dance Theatre of Harlem, the Urban Bush Women and Bill T Jones; but were not able to locate British Black companies such as Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble, Kokuma, Badejo Arts and others in their mental files of dance history. She could not readily fathom the reason for this, except that all those Black companies in America were considered contemporary dance companies, while the British ones were regarded as ‘ethnic’ dance groups. It is arguable that the difference may not only be located in race but also in the dance styles and forms as regards how theatrical they appear on stage.

In this same book, Carty writes, “ in Britain, when we use the term ‘African’ dance, there is often a connotation that we are talking about traditional dance such as that performed by Adzido, for instance” (Carty, 2007, 17). This notion does not provide any clarity about what the term

traditional dance might mean. Adewole's experience makes it clear that dance students in Britain often do not know about Adzido. How then do we expect the ordinary British public to consider the performances of such an unknown group to be taken into account in a definition of the term 'African dance'?

Having revealed the vagueness of the term, I would at least like to say what a dance from an African community looks like, especially in its relation to non-African dance forms. In this context it may be agreed that any dance form originating from any part of Africa can be considered as an African Dance<sup>4</sup>. The African-American scholar, Molefi Kete Asante (1985) comes to the theoretical conclusion that, if there is a European culture, Asian culture, and Arabic culture, then there is also an African culture. Asante's view focuses on the common beliefs and sensitivities African cultures share. Nevertheless, that is not to say that there are no observable and distinct differences between the cultures of different societies in different African regions. Asante realistically demonstrates that, although the cultural histories and linguistic characteristics of different African societies are palpably dissimilar, they share the same overarching culture: "their particular histories are distinct but their general history is the same" (Asante 1985, 4). Thus similarities that exist in African dance forms suggested the possibility of constructing a generalised dance culture although this is still debatable. Perhaps, we might argue that the functions dances in Africa perform are quite similar. In discussing the functions of Zulu

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<sup>4</sup> A dance form originating from an African community which represents the philosophy and identity of the particular African group. Certainly, there is no single dance form that can represent the whole continent even in the face of the similarities that exist across many African cultures. Although the capitalised form 'African Dance' will be used to represent the similarities that exist in African dances, it is a generalisation that does not intend to represent all African dance cultures.

dance in South Africa, historian Tara Firenzi (2012) articulates the relevance of dance in historical, political and socio-cultural dimensions of African societies. She asserts,

Abundant evidence clearly indicates the ubiquity and centrality of dance in African societies, as well as the complex social and political functions it has historically performed. Furthermore, dance practices can be a wonderful source for investigating community-wide, shared cultural experiences, and analysing these public and symbolically rich practices has great potential to add depth to our understanding of African social, political and religious structures (Firenzi 2012, 403).

Firenzi's assertion underscores not only the notion that dance helps shape the shared cultural identity of the various African ethnic groups but also the importance of recognising their distinctive characteristics although similarities may exist.

### **7.5. Similarities in African Dance Forms**

The African-American dance scholar, Kariamu Welsh Asante has noted some of the overlaps that occur in African dances. Her work, *Commonalities in African Dance* (1985), lists from her African-American perspective seven aesthetic characteristics in African dance. These include:

1, Polyrhythm –many simultaneous rhythms emphasising the inseparability of movement and rhythm; 2, Polycentrism – the response to orchestration by the various parts of the body; 3, Curvilinear-Form – the shape and structure which represent aspects of African society or mythology; 4, Dimensionality – the texture of music, dance and the entire art form which one sees, hears and feels; 5, Epic memory – experience drawn upon which contributes greatly to artistic expression; 6, Repetition – the intensification of movements by repetition from one level

to another until satisfaction has been achieved; and 7, Holism – the whole-group participation whereby performance is placed above any part.

Paramount, however, is the fact that African dance cannot be discussed effectively without its music. The drum is a musical instrument found in many parts of Africa and it can be said to represent the heartbeat of the whole community; its power is able to evoke emotions that touch the soul of every community member. Some of the attributes observed by Asante may not be unique to Africa and may be rather general but they help us begin to understand some of the commonalities found in the continent and other parts of the dance world. Therefore, to some extent, dances in Africa could be said to share a number of characteristics with other non-African dance forms. Regardless of this observation, I still hold my argument that the holistic nature of the African forms in that you cannot talk about them without discussing the people and their entire culture, their use as a historical document and their communicative nature distinguish them from non-African forms.

As I have demonstrated clearly about the Anlo-Ewe in chapter four, ethnic groups from every African country have their own individual dances for the performance of ceremonial and social functions, celebrating and marking rites of passage, sex, the seasons, recreation and weddings. The dancer can be a teacher, commentator, spiritual medium, healer or storyteller who uses the dance to communicate specific messages to specific people who would have been using this medium in daily routines for years.

Whilst at one level, the term African dance has been used in ignorance to the extent of referring to the continent as a single country, at another level the label has its uses in demonstrating some shared aesthetic sensibilities. In the next section I discuss the current terminology that is widely used in Britain.

## **7.6. Current Terminology in Britain**

The more recent term 'African People's Dance', introduced by dancer and choreographer Peter Badejo (1993), has become the most widely used in Britain. As dance scholar and Laban notator Jean Johnson Jones suggests, "the term African people's dance aims to reflect the complex diversity of dance and movement practices of both the African continent and the African diasporic cultures which can be witnessed in Britain" (1999, 100).

While many dance practitioners and scholars may be wondering why a single term is used to refer to more than just the African form, I believe it is very important to consider the relationship between Africa and diasporic areas like the Caribbean and Britain. King Dorset's work (2008) responds significantly to some of these issues by exploring the Black dance culture in London during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. His work examines the importance of dance in African culture and analyses why and how it survived the Trans-Atlantic slavery and what this represented. Sociologist Paul Gilroy in Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness (1993) offers the concept of the Black Atlantic as a space of "transnational cultural construction" (Gilroy 1993, 49). This work rejuvenates the concern of 'race' or ethnicity in modern scholarship and argues that racial slavery was integral to Western civilization. Not only does Gilroy construct the



identity of people whose backgrounds are connected to the Atlantic slave trade as the emblem of his new concept of diasporic peoples, but also his concept breaks with the traditional diasporic model based on the idea that diasporic people are separated by a communal source or origin. Furthermore, Gilroy's theme of double consciousness, borrowed from W.E.B. Du Bois<sup>5</sup> involves Black Atlantic striving to be both European and Black through their relationship to the land of their birth (which I would call their native culture) and their ethnic political constituency being absolutely transformed.

It is important to mention that even in the diaspora, there are many African nations. Historian John Charles Chasteen (2004) provides a comprehensive discussion on dance, focusing on its use as a tool for constructing identity among such neo-African nations in the diaspora. Referring to dance as the beating heart of the neo-African communities, Chasteen states,

So if dancers were preserving an African identity, many others were acquiring a new one in an African mode. To understand their dance is to understand their recovered sense of identity and belonging in the lonely experience of slavery. The black nations of Buenos Aires left many traces in the historical, far more than did the nations of Rio. But the most helpful descriptions of their dance come from across the Rio de la Plata in Montevideo (Chasteen, 2004, 102).

It is important to note here that in the Caribbean too, each island has its own traditions that come from its particular African roots and the island's individual colonial past of British, French, Spanish or Dutch influence. It is on record that 18th century Black dances such as the *Calenda*,

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<sup>5</sup> William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, a Pan-Africanist, sociologist, historian and civil right activist was the first African-American to earn a doctorate degree at Harvard University in the USA. At the age of 93, he moved to Ghana at the invitation of Ghana's president Kwame Nkrumah and lived there till his death on 27<sup>th</sup> August, 1963.

and *Chica* were slave dances which drew on African traditions and rhythms (Curtis, 1992; Gerstin, 2004).

### **7.7. Berto Pasuka and His Ballet Nègres**

The modern history of Black theatre dance in Britain, according to Carty (2007), can trace its roots to Berto Pasuka, a Jamaican-born dance artist who learned dancing from the Maroon Negroes, descendants of runaway slaves, before moving to Britain in 1939. What drew British public attention to Pasuka was the fact that he formed the first Black British dance company called Les Ballet Nègres in 1946. Adewole (2007) states, "On moving to England, Jamaican born Berto Pasuka joined with Richard Riley to form Les Ballet Nègres" (Adewole 2007, 27). With a group consisting of British-born Black dancers, a Canadian, three Nigerians, a Trinidadian, a German, a Guyanese, two Jamaicans and a Ghanaian according to Adewole, Pasuka launched an eight-week season at a small fringe theatre in 1946. Cultural theorist Bob Ramdhanie (2005) states "Pasuka's Company rehearsed in studios near Piccadilly Circus and opened with four ballets at the Twentieth Century Theatre in Bayswater" (Ramdhanie 2005, 155). According to Ramdhanie, Ballet Nègres was not only the first Black dance company in Britain, but also the first of its kind in the whole of Europe, and indeed soon they were embarking on international tours. Pasuka's choreographic pieces became renowned for expressing nothing but human emotion through African dance forms and idioms (Carty, 2007). I recently watched an old footage of one of their popular choreographic pieces called 'Market Day' on You Tube and it is not significantly different from what is generally called 'dance drama' in Ghana. It is a piece that combines dramatic enactment, using simple gestures, with music in a holistic style.

Although there were other Black dance practitioners in Britain before and after Pasuka's arrival, their inability to form themselves into a company denied them recognition from British society. One such practitioner was an Anlo-Ewe Ghanaian musician, Philip Gbeho who introduced Anlo-Ewe and Ghanaian music and dance to Britain in the early 1940s when he was studying in London on a British Government scholarship. Gbeho returned to the then Gold Coast and worked as a music and dance teacher (Botwe-Asamoah, 2005). In 1957 he was asked to compose the Ghana National Anthem, "God bless our homeland Ghana" and he went on to become the first Ghanaian director of the Arts Council of Ghana in 1959.

### **7.8. The Fall of Ballet Nègres**

Despite the impressive performances of Pasuka and his company, Les Ballets Nègres was excluded from the 1951 festival of Britain probably because it was believed to represent colonial and not British culture. "Pasuka's work was viewed as 'exotic' and 'primitive' but it was the fillip needed to uplift the spirit of sections of British society" (Ramdhanie 2005, 157). This clearly shows how the company's Africanist expressions marginalised them. Although credited for dancing innovations, they were ultimately excluded because of their 'Otherness'. Scholars such as Goldberg (1996), Hegel (1999) and Sorgel (2007) have discussed how 'Otherness' was synonymous to inferiority as a perception held by colonisers about the colonised. Sorgel for instance writes, "Representing the colonised as subhuman species, colonialist hegemony was founded on a make-belief strategy which superimposed colonialist discourse on difference as Other, ie, inferior and more importantly: free labour to uphold early capitalism" (2007, 27). Sadly, this European 'selfhood' could not allow Pasuka and his group to be accepted as part of

the canon in Britain. The question here is, would they have been accepted as the part of the canon if they had not expressed a Black ideology? Or would they have been encouraged and maintained if they had employed the concept of 'double consciousness' to express White dreams in their Black dance performances? Like Paul Gilroy, Elizabeth Chin (2011) also adopts W.E.B Du Bois' concept of double consciousness to discuss Michael Jackson's 1991 Panther dance which accompanied his song, *Black or White*. She explores the misunderstanding and vilification of panther dance as an organised practice deeply connected to racial dynamics in the United States. Chin's article touches on how Black dream ballets were considered as entertaining but not artistic due to the fact that they did not express White dreams- a preferred taste of their White dominated audience. Chin uses the term 'dreams' in reference to the contents of a dance production whose intricacies and dynamics are capable of appealing to the audiences who patronise such productions. Therefore, 'White dreams' refers to a dance performance that is dominated by elements that appeal to the White audiences whilst 'Black dreams' refers to dance productions that are dominated by elements of Black identity. She however argues that the work of African American dancer Katherine Dunham and Jackson's creations stand out as two distinct Black creations that defied the expectations of White audience taste. They were outstanding and crossed the divide. "Both Jackson's *Black or White* and Dunham's choreographic statement in *Stormy Weather*, both of which explore Black dreams that lie outside the territory laid out by the expectations of white audiences while remaining inextricably bound up with these expectations" (Chin 2011, 61).

Chin's point could explain why Pasuka's company had been considered as an entertaining group and not an artistic one with the required qualifications to be part of the canon in Britain. Another response may give consideration to the identity of the dancers, or the choreographic pieces or both in classifying them as successful entertainers but not up to that level of qualification to the status of a dance company worth accepting into the canon. Whichever angle we analyse it from, this treatment meted out to the company could be considered as the beginning of the racial storm which eventually relegated African and Caribbean forms and idioms to the margins and rendered them illegitimate and lacking in credibility. The situation sadly denied them official subsidy, making it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for them to survive on proceeds from box office takings alone to maintain the dancers and create new works. "Les Ballet Nègres operated between 1946 and 1953 but the lack of public subsidy and Pasuka's own diminishing funds meant that the end was drawing nigh" (Ramdhanie 2005, 158). As a result, the company lasted for only six years. "Les Ballets Nègres could not get funding though and survived only on box-office receipts. Hence, despite tremendous popularity here and across Europe, it folded in 1952" (Carty 2007, 17). Therefore, Black dance, one of the ethnic minority arts, suffered serious neglect, which led to its near disappearance in Britain during the 1960s.

Forty-seven years after the demise of Ballet Nègres, dance critic and writer Keith Watson summarised the debate on why Britain's first Black dance company was known to comparatively few. Writing in the 5<sup>th</sup> August, 1999 edition of *The Guardian* Watson stated:

In 1948 the liner Windrush docked in London, fresh from the Caribbean, and - so the story goes - the course was set for a modern multi-ethnic society. But two years earlier, Britain already boasted its own Black dance company. Way ahead of

its time, Les Ballets Nègres was blazing a trail for black culture. Yet, despite headline tours throughout Britain and Europe, the company gets barely a footnote in British dance history (Watson 1999, 7).

Watson was concerned about the sudden rise and fall of the company and wondered about Pasuka's contradictory impulses, drawing inspiration from Afro-Caribbean folk-tales and rituals and yet labeling the result "ballet". Of course, many Africanists would want to know the rationale behind Pasuka's strategy. The name may be a cunning artifice trading on sophisticated French cachet, as Watson and other critics may view it, but what mattered during the post-second world war period was the putting of the concept of 'Black' at the forefront for promotion. However, it is also possible to link Pasuka's idea to the fact that many African countries' colonial background was French, English, German or Portuguese. As a result, there appears to be no specific word for dance in the various African languages. In the case of Ghana, the national word is 'dance' and I would imagine in French colonised nations the national word would be 'danse' while dance companies use the word ballet as their name.

### **7.9. Sankofa, a Ghanaian Group on British Tour**

One could argue that the movement towards multiculturalism in the 1970s was initiated politically by Prime Minister Harold Wilson and its subsequent implementation saw the leadership of James Callaghan with new legislations, including equality rights such as "the 1976

Race Relations Act" (Grau 2008, 232). This certainly created a welcoming environment for the re-emergence of African dance in Britain (Khan, 1976). Hence a fifteen member group of dancers and musicians led by George Dzikunu with the name of *Sankofa* as mentioned in the introduction made a journey from Ghana to Britain in 1974. The main purpose of this group was to perform Ghanaian dances as a way of promoting the cultural heritage of Ghana. While some members of Sankofa made their way back to Ghana after a successful British tour, others decided to stay in London to become cultural ambassadors due to the enthusiasm and prestige with which their performances were received.

But these cultural ambassadors could not continue their work effectively due to lack of funding as well as some opposition from British society. George Fiawoo, one of these Ghanaian cultural ambassadors, revealed in an interview I conducted that in going about their usual practice of doing Ghanaian dance workshops in schools in the early days, they thought it wise and culturally appropriate to be in African costumes. These costumes rather became objects of mockery as, Fiawoo recalled, even students made the most derogatory statements about them, such as "Look at the black monkeys; here they come again in their pyjamas" (Fiawoo, 2010). At the time many discouraged the development of ethnic minority arts with a general claim that efforts to do so would bring about division in society.

In her report commissioned by the Arts Council of Britain in 1976 entitled *The Arts Britain Ignores*, Naseem Khan identified three factors that may have led to the claim by British

authorities that efforts to foster ethnic minority arts were divisive. These are, the demonstrated needs of the new British which touch on the original culture of his or her parents; the notion that Britain is not homogeneous, considering the fact that its growth stemmed through cultural accretions, citing difference in custom and life expressions between classes and regions; and the third factor being the question of whether moves to encourage ethnic minority arts were the free will of the people (Khan 1976, 6-7). Khan strongly disagreed with the above claim and instead articulated the need to encourage the ethnic minority arts in Britain. She argued that the introduction of ethnic minority arts provide the opportunity of seeing, learning and experiencing fresh cultural forms, thereby creating a multiracial society, the kind of society which is worth fostering and promoting. The report also made reference to Felix Cobson<sup>6</sup>, a Ghanaian teacher based in Britain who had already started teaching African Drumming in a secondary school in Harlow. He tried to mobilise these Ghanaian cultural ambassadors into his dance group but unfortunately this move did not materialise. According to Khan's report, Cobson had already trained and presented on stage young native British dancers in West African dance, a performance which became the talk of the town (Khan 1976, 17). Indeed, the work of these Ghanaian cultural ambassadors became popular as they travelled the length and breadth of the country, teaching the Ghanaian dance repertory. This led to the springing up of many dance troupes all over Britain doing mainly Ghanaian dance forms; "a truly exciting time of 20 groups of great popularity" (Carty, 2007, 18) including *Ekome* (Bristol), *Agudze* (East London), *Irie!* (London), *Kokuma* (Birmingham), *Delado* (Liverpool), *Lanzel* (Wolverhampton), *Ajah* (Derby), and *Odienne* and *Kalubash* (Nottingham). It is important to note here that while many of these

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<sup>6</sup> Felix Cobbson was a Ghanaian teacher who introduced the teaching of Ghanaian drum music in the GCSE curriculum in Britain in the 1970s. He later established an African cultural centre in Essex called Aklowa. In 2005, I visited Aklowa and met Cobson who later gave me the opportunity to lead some drumming workshops involving school children.



companies have closed the few surviving ones include *Irie!* and Agudze which receives funding from London borough of Waltham Forest. All the above groups apart from *Kokuma* and *Irie!* are Ghanaian dance troupes. Although *Kokuma* and *Irie!* were established basically as Caribbean companies, they were later influenced by Ghanaian dance forms taught by members of *Sankofa*. According to Ramdhanie, "*Ekome* in Bristol, *Lanzel* in Wolverhampton and *Delado* in Liverpool were all supported by Peter Blackman<sup>7</sup> and his colleagues and these groups were learning social and religious dances, mainly from Ghana" (Ramdhanie, 2005, 179). In order to assess the factors that contributed to the presence of Ghanaian dances in Britain as a re-emergence of African dance, I will now return to the discussion of *Sankofa*.

One remarkable reality to note here is the fact that *Sankofa* was not the national dance company of Ghana, neither was it a regional or district group. How did this amateur group find its way into Britain in a performance tour to represent Ghana? Exploring the factors that contributed to their success brings to bear the extent to which the Ghana Dance Ensemble as a post-independence national dance company, born out of the concept of cultural emancipation had marketed Ghanaian dance internationally.

In a nutshell, as I pointed out earlier, the operations of the Ghana Dance Ensemble led to the creation of many other dance groups in Ghana, particularly in the capital, Accra and *Sankofa* was one of them. The Ghana Dance Ensemble according to Iddrisu (2011) was able to market Ghana

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<sup>7</sup> Peter Blackman founded the 'Steel N Skin' Afro-Caribbean workshop band in London during the 1970s. The group featured ex-members of 20th Century Steel Band (Grandmaster Flash's fave) and comprised of young nightclub musicians born in Ghana, Nigeria, St. Kitts, Trinidad and Britain. With the multicultural composition of its membership, the group gave concerts and workshops in London schools, expanding nationwide to prisons, psychiatric hospitals and summer festivals.

in their international tours, inspiring forward-thinking dance promoters and producers to troop to Ghana in search of performing groups. "The Ghana Dance Ensemble has stimulated innovations in ethnic art forms and expanded their popularity locally, nationally, and internationally" (Iddrisu, 2011, 119). In my interview with George Fiawoo, who was a key member of *Sankofa* during the period, he revealed that the group used to perform at a restaurant in Accra. The owner of the restaurant Amos Opoku who doubled as the founder of *Sankofa* had a discussion with some of their regular British guests, who were impressed by the performance of the group and the result was their British tour in 1974. Fiawoo explained in an interview, "In 1974, at the time we travelled with our group *Sankofa* to Britain, the Ghana Dance Ensemble was on a performance tour in Russia. In fact, it was a trip to be undertaken by the Ghana Dance Ensemble but in their absence, the authorities felt *Sankofa* was the viable alternative" (Fiawoo, 2012). Fiawoo's narrative also made it clear that coming to Britain on an artist group visit visa did not classify them as legally permitted to work following their performance tour and therefore they had absolutely no source of income to sustain them until 1977 when three of them (George Fiawoo, Isaac Tagoe and John Mensah) were given the chance by the Inner London Education Authority to work as youth and adult community teachers. Considering the chronology of events at the time, it is possible to think that the effect of Khan's reports had opened the chance for these Ghanaian artists who were tasked to basically teach Ghanaian drum music and dance forms with the emphasis on how best Ghanaian arts could enhance cross-cultural education in London.

#### **7.10. The Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble**

The Ghanaian artists who stayed and engaged in cultural education after the British tour with *Sankofa*, included Anlo-Ewes such as George Dzikunu, (the group leader), George Fiawoo,

Christine Ahiagbede and John Mensah. Ten years after their British tour, these Ghanaian artists were still practicing the Ghanaian arts both individually and in smaller groups, but sadly they were not able to revive *Sankofa*.

However, in 1984, Dzikunu mobilised a few other artists in order to form Adzido. My interview with dance scholar and choreographer Francis Nii Yartey suggests that the formation of Adzido had always been the dream of George Dzikunu during his days of working as a freelance dance artist with many Caribbean dance companies in Britain. Yartey, who was working with the Probation Service in Britain prior to the formation of Adzido, explained in an interview: "George had a great idea and we used to discuss it in my room. Later it turned into a reality" (Yartey, 2012). My own presence in Britain as a traditional African dance practitioner can also be traced to Adzido (in that it was their artistic director, George Dzikunu who facilitated my recruitment) and I would like to discuss the company in detail. The name *Adzido* in Anlo-Ewe language refers to the Baobab tree<sup>8</sup>. This name was taken from the Ewe proverb that goes; *Nunya Adzidoe, asi metune o*. (Knowledge is like the trunk of a baobab tree that a single person's arms cannot encompass). To further understand why the Anlo-Ewe chose the baobab tree for this example of folk wisdom, one would have to investigate what qualities the tree possesses and what it stands for.

### **7.11. Significance of the Baobab Tree**

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<sup>8</sup> Adzido, the Baobab tree is not visible in Britain and this accounts for why the Company (Adzido) often referred to the Oak tree. In a way, this is culturally relevant as the Oak tree can be found in Britain and more so, both trees have similar connotations.

The Baobab is among the largest and longest-lived trees on earth. It survives prolonged droughts by storing water in its massive, fibrous, sponge-like trunk which can be up to thirty to sixty feet in diameter. That trunk can be hollowed out to make a shelter, or cut into water containers. When in leaf, the Baobab produces an edible fruit that has the highest concentration of Vitamin C of any plant. The leaves themselves are rich in Vitamin A and the shade of those leaves and branches provide a relatively cool refuge for other living things in the sub-Saharan heat. Anlo-Ewe traditional scholars, with whom I worked in Ghana including Dartey Kumodzie, explained that, in addition to the above attributes, the size of baobab tree represents the length, breath, height and depth of Ewe indigenous knowledge, a knowledge that transcends the understanding of a single human being. Therefore the name *Adzido* may be conceptualised as a symbol of endurance, conservation, creativity, greatness, ingenuity and dialogue. Gbolonyo (2009) considers the baobab tree with its Ewe proverb as a symbol of the greatness of Ewe indigenous knowledge and asserts that its scope can never be reached by any single person. He explains,

The proverb, like the tree, has been with the Ewe since time immemorial. In the simplest terms, the proverb underscores Ewe indigenous perception and concept of knowledge and wisdom. It shows the limitlessness of human knowledge and that there is always more knowledge, both old and new, to be learned. In Ewe indigenous philosophical conception, there is a limit to what any one individual can know; but there is no limit to what can be known. In other words, no one individual can claim monopoly of knowledge and wisdom; no one is omniscient. Upon this philosophy, are Ewe indigenous knowledge and cultural values based (Gbolonyo 2009, 19).

Gbolonyo's explication provides orientation through which we may understand the Ewe conceptualisation of knowledge. In this case, it is possible to argue that *Adzido*, with the name alone positions itself as a carrier of Ewe indigenous knowledge and that some of its members felt that moral teaching was part of its remit. However, it is important for the carrier of this

knowledge, (which refers to the company and its members) to demonstrate through its performances that no individual or a single company can claim monopoly of what they carry.

### **7.12. The Formation and Early Stages of Adzido**

Adzido came into being initially as a Ghanaian traditional dance group and its early performances were Ghanaian dances that usually signify a rite of passage such as a child moving into adulthood, a marriage or to signify love. An example is *Tokoe*, a puberty dance of Dangbe people in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. However, before Adzido got hold of this dance, the Ewes from the Volta Region of Ghana through two Anlo-Ewe dance artists and scholars, Kobla Ladzekpo and C.K.Ganyo, had already taken *Tokoe* and adapted it into an Anlo-Ewe social dance in the 1960s. During the same period Doris Green, an African American scholar, made her way to Ghana on a Fulbright grant to notate *Tokoe* dance. I was privileged to have been chosen as a special assistant to Doris Green when she made another trip to Ghana in 2002 to complete her notation.

These significant changes were made to the *Tokoe* performance by Ladzekpo and Ganyo: the Anlo-Ewe drums replaced the original Dangbe ones and *Tokoe* songs were translated into the Ewe language. Ewe storytellers and tradition-keepers listed fishing as the main occupation that brought the two ethnic groups together and this perception received confirmation from Godwin Gati, an Ewe dance instructor, who spoke to me in an interview that “the adaptation happened when the two ethnic groups once lived together at Ada, a fishing community in Ghana” (Gati,

2011). While few people may look at this transformation as a giveaway of one's culture on the part of the Dangbes, my research participants maintained that the vast majority accept it as a significant exchange of culture due to the fact that many Dangbes are now able to speak Ewe language in addition to their mother tongue. Whatever the reason, it is the basis of community cohesion and multiculturalism that both communities continue to experience today.

Tokoe song:

<i>Nyonuvi ade tso Ge gbo</i>	A pretty young woman returns from Accra
<i>Ye wo flea mi vevi ade</i>	And she buys a special perfume
<i>Ye wotso nko ne be</i>	And she names it
<i>Lorlor le mudor me</i>	Love is in the mosquito net (in bed)
<i>Lorlor le Africa</i>	Love is in Africa
<i>Yiye dekapuiwo mi bia eta</i>	Handsome men, ask about the cost
<i>Ne miayi Lome mia flee</i>	And travel to Lome (Togo) to buy it.

The song above is a popular Tokoe tune in Ewe language. There are two major concepts that are embodied in the song. These are the concept of enhanced beauty, displayed by the woman's ability to spend so much money on a special perfume; and the concept of being in love which according to the Ewe cultural norms must not be expressed in public but in the mosquito net. The existence of mosquitoes in many African communities necessitated the use of *mudor* (mosquito net) in Anlo-Eweland to prevent the malaria giving parasite from biting both young and old. Therefore, in Anlo-Eweland, the word *mudorme* (in the mosquito net) refers to the bed and its mosquito net.

Relating these two concepts to the song above reveals a three point advice for young women and their potential lovers pointing to views of gender and gender relationships. First, it tells all young

women that natural beauty is not enough and therefore, there is the need to employ the many make up options available to them including a special perfume for freshening up. Secondly, it tells the men to be aware that to be in love with a woman, they must be ready to foot the bills of such extra beauties including the special perfume. The third point is the most important of all. It emphasises the Ewe cultural norms to both the woman and her lover that the expression of being in love must be done in the mosquito net (in bed) and not in public. Ewe norms forbid publicly expressing romantic acts such as passionate kissing in public which may be considered in other societies as an impressive way to affirm love to your partner.

There is the question of whether it is possible to use African dance performance to reinforce moral teaching (as demonstrated in the above *Tokoe* song) in non African societies. Performing *Tokoe* in Britain poses a great challenge to not only Adzido but also to any Ghanaian group that may attempt to represent this social dance in the diaspora. In the Ghanaian communities where *Tokoe* is natively performed, singing of the songs and dramatisation of their meaning form an integral part of the performance. In Britain, it is no more the dramatisation of the historical and cultural background of *Tokoe*, but so much of how you transform the dance into a theatrical performance, a practice that has the potential of separating the dance from its native cultural values. As will be seen in Chapter 8, my reconstruction of Anlo-Ewe dances in Britain changes the choreographic structure of *Tokoe* as well as some of the movements, making it a completely new version which the Ghanaian custodians may deem unacceptable.

### **7.13. Funding Versus Representation.**

The performances of Adzido in Britain gradually evolved into what could be described as classical African ethnic dances, adapted for stage performance and structured around key themes such as cultural heritage, identity and tradition. Funding for Adzido in the beginning was not easy, considering the lukewarm attitude towards ethnic minority arts by some British communities as well as government policy on such groups in the early years of its operations. The company in an attempt to promote its image in the midst of funding problems continued to operate as a dance group at a local level reaching only communities and schools whose local coffers could pay for their services.

Music teacher David Ruffer has documented how Adzido became a real highlight of African week celebrations at William Parker School in April, 1991. He stated,

The main feature of African Week was the residence of Adzido, the Pan African Dance Ensemble. We were most fortunate in getting Adzido to take on this residency, but this left us with a major problem. Multicultural weeks have to be self-financing, and Adzido's fees and accommodation alone would cost the best part of £3,000, so we had to attract paying customers to the events in African Week to avoid a deficit (Ruffer 1992, 163-164).

Ruffer's statement underscores two factors that are very vital to the discussion of Adzido. These are the company's relevance in the celebration of multiculturalism and a confirmation that Adzido had virtually no financial support even at a time diversity and multiculturalism found a place in the British school calendar. Ruffer also acknowledged in his report that apart from stage performances Adzido also delivered drumming and dance workshops to both students and their parents as part of their residency. He noted,

I found the dances the most moving part of a very intense play, the two that stood out for me being the Kpanlogo (a calypso) and Konyiffafa (a mourning dance).



The drummers, who were all GCSE and A-level students, did exceptionally well; they performed on a set of drums from the Ewe people from Ghana each of which was called by a different name, Sogo, Kidi and Kanganu; contrary to the impression given on 'Coast to Coast', our local TVS news programme, none of these drums was called a bongo (Ruffer 1992, 165).

It appeared from the above testimony that Anlo-Ewe dances formed the core repertoire of Adzido in their early stages. *Konyifafa* which was outstanding alongside *Kpanlogo* as noted above, is an Anlo-Ewe dance created for the Ghana Dance Ensemble in the 1960s by Mare Opoku as a stage performance used in gracing funeral events. It is a creation that combined three Anlo-Ewe dances namely, *misego*, representing liberation *agbadza* representing fresh life and *gakpa* which represents rhythm and costume. Being a lead dancer in the Ghana Dance Ensemble at the time this dance was created George Dzikunu was able to adapt *Konyifafa* and later used it to enrich *Sankofa's* repertoire. Another Anlo-Ewe element in their residency had been their musical resource which comprised of the Anlo-Ewe set of drums namely, *sogo*, *kidi* and *kagan* all of which I discussed in Chapter 3. Also, this residency by Adzido educated a British local community and facilitated positive representation about Ghanaian/African music and dance. Remarkably, Adzido began receiving funding from the Arts Council of England soon after this residency. It may be argued that Khan's influential report (1976) also did much to create a new awareness; it led to a reconsideration of funding policies and the setting up of new institutions to take care of such groups. Carty (2007) observes that in the 1970s and early 1980s, much of the funding for the minority arts came through social rather than artistic sources. "Adzido was initially under the auspices of the Manpower Services Commission, while the majority of groups received small pockets of funding from Local Authority Social Services and Education budgets rather than artistic ones" (Carty, 2007, 20). Due to the nature of their funding, as revealed by Carty, these ethnic minority groups were not motivated to expand their artistic work in order to

reach audiences beyond the then small community outreach environment. In other words, they were performing what Nahachewsky (2011) considers as 'vival' dances, stressing that "they are often participatory in nature and often become theatricalised as they are revived" (Nahachewsky 2011, 4).

Adzido's first full length piece was *Coming Home*, with 28 dancers and musicians telling the story of the son of a chief who returns home to Africa from the West and discovers he has forgotten his tribal dances. This show was performed at Sadler's Wells Theatre in 1988. Significantly, this production became one of the works for GCSE dance and an educational pack was produced by the National Research Centre for Dance. Adzido's expansion from small-community impact through national to continental/international status put the company in the limelight for support and encouragement, thereby attaining regular Arts Council funding from 1991. Their major productions apart from *Coming Home* included *Under African Skies* (1990), *Siye Goli* (1992), *Akwaaba* (1993), and *Thand Abantwana* (1995). Small-scale productions included *Behind the Mask* (1993) and *Shango the God of Thunder* (1996). Adzido saw significant development with further expansion of their repertoire to cover dances from many parts of the African continent and the membership increased up to thirty-two dancers and musicians who continued to showcase different types of African traditional dances until April, 2005 when the Company folded following the withdrawal of their funding by the British Council. In the Telegraph edition of 5<sup>th</sup> April, 2005, dance critic Ismene Brown wrote:

And so farewell then, Adzido. The African dance company that soaked up a million-pound annual subsidy (and for three years produced nothing on stage) gave its final performances last week. I wrote about this sorry state of events a year ago, and the Arts Council, which had turned a blind eye to the scandal, finally turned off the tap (Brown, 2005, 7).

It seems extraordinary that a whole company with full funding did not produce any stage work in three years. What is more striking, however, is the absence of an official statement from Adzido to confirm or deny this report. At this stage, it is important to consider the Company's mission statement below:

Adzido Pan Africa Dance Ensemble exists to promote the appreciation, understanding and practice of African peoples dance, its music and its cultural heritage, in Britain and abroad. Adzido seeks to promote the richly diverse heritage of all cultural groups of Black Africa by presenting dance, together with music, in forms which both respect and illuminate traditional values and have relevance in a contemporary, multi-cultural context.<sup>9</sup>

The mission statement of Adzido places the Company in a very difficult position. First of all, the promotion of diverse heritage of all Black Africa through dance is a dream that appears to be extremely difficult if not impossible to realise. Secondly, to create dance forms which both respect and illuminate African traditional values and at the same time have relevance in contemporary multicultural Britain is indeed a challenging endeavour. Although Adzido's multi-dimensional role in this difficult enterprise puts the Company in a very complex situation, regular funding from the Arts Council could be seen as a source of motivation for this herculean task. In the Stage News of 7<sup>th</sup> October, 2004, Jeremy Austin wrote:

Formed by George Dzikunu in 1984 as Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble, Britain's only large-scale Black dance company has received regular funding from Arts Council of England (ACE) since 1991, supporting a full-time group of dancers and musicians with a remit to tour Britain and overseas. This has risen from an initial £386,250 to £1,011,555 by this year (Austin 2004, 4).

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<sup>9</sup> Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble, 'Company Information' Promotional Material (1985, 1) as cited in Ramdhanie (2005, 192)

Austin's report suggests that Adzido's funding from the Arts Council had not only been regular, but also it had received consistent incremental jumps. Certainly, one would have thought the over twenty years of operations by Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble in Britain served the conditions attached to their funding, thereby warranting the gradual increment of their annual funding from the initial hundreds of thousands to over a million pounds. While it is important to acknowledge the fact that regular funding is one of the wheels that propel such artistic companies to realise their goals, it is equally important to be aware of the challenges that confront these companies, such as pressure to compromise their philosophy and direction in an attempt to satisfy funding requirements.

Adzido's primary aim as an African group as indicated by the mission statement was not only to exhibit the cultural diversity of Black Africa through dance, but also to educate Britain and Europe in the wisdom and good values embedded in the art form, which can be harnessed and used in building a peaceful and united contemporary multiracial society. A few questions arise from this. Where did Adzido members place their primary aim against the expectation from their funders? Did the Company represent African philosophy? Did they consider and respond to the dynamism of British urban society, which was totally different from the pace of their African origin? What effect did all the above challenges have on their choreographic pieces as well as their general creativity? In order to answer these questions, let us consider the views of other African dance practitioners in Britain during the period.

Following the demise of Adzido, an interview with Peter Badejo (2006) captures some of the myriad issues which surrounded Black dance in Britain for too long. Notable among these issues have been: definition; investment; survival versus art; funding to fail; the educational training and professional development of artists. Badejo explained to Ukarchi Akalawu:

Many artists are now so scared, because they think may be if they receive £1000 funding, and then don't do exactly what the funder wants to see, they will lose that money and subsequent opportunities. People are faced with the stark reality of survival and possible starvation if they get it wrong. Given that most African dance practitioners (in common with their contemporaries in other dance forms) have no other interest or expertise, the danger of falling out with the funders weighs heavily on their minds, knowing that the alternative is a penurious life-working as a cleaner or minicabbing, at best (Badejo, 2006). See also Akalawu (2007, 95).

Badejo's views make it clear that if the artists cannot have the freedom and support to be in control of their materials and creative processes, then their dance companies cannot assume that feeling of belonging which fosters a sense of identity. This and other social factors, including their position as a black company in British society, could be considered as the main feature that significantly undermined their primary aim of representing the philosophy of Black nations, Black regions or the Black continent through bodily expressions that were once labelled barbaric and immoral by their host/colonisers.

While I recognise the complexity Adzido had to deal with as a company, I also argue here that the toughness of the challenge that confronted them could have also stimulated creativity in their choreographic work. Adzido was not the only black dance company in the African diaspora that

had to deal with such complexities. Although my focus is on Britain, it may be useful here to refer to some American examples of success to support my argument.

Gottschild (2012) discusses a similar situation that confronted not only Black dancers but also the whole Black population in America. What she describes as economics of discrimination meant that Black professionals were deprived of the financial means to compete with Whites of similar rank and station. "A typical black person might work for a white or black employer in a menial position such as a janitor, laundress, or seasonal farm worker" (Gottschild 2012, 1-2). She also attributes Du Bois' double consciousness to what she describes as double standards which refers to American society urging Black people to get assimilated and yet preventing them from participating in mainstream activities. She argues,

Looking at the interaction between blacks and whites, we discover the double standards that are implicit in the coexistence of a dominating and subordinated culture, and that account for the "double consciousness" that plagued African Americans, eloquently described by William Edward Burghardt (W.E.B) Du Bois. Early on, white culture relayed a message to the black sub-culture to self-reject, to assimilate, and to adopt white standards (by embracing Christianity, by "controlling" unruly hair, by imitating white patterns of speech). But the message created a double blind: blacks were to emulate white society but were prohibited entry into it, and that's where double consciousness comes in. Blacks were in it but not of it; they were obliged to bridge two worlds, black and white, in a delicate balancing act, seeing themselves through the eyes of white society as being both American and black - two ideals at war with each other (Gottschild 2012, 2-3).

Although Adzido's situation might not be extremely challenging during the time of its existence as compared to the reality in America during the same period, one can see from Badejo's account that there were some elements of double standards. But if dance companies like Alvin Ailey and

Philadanco could survive all those racial storms, then we can say confidently that it is not only about the identity of the company and its members, but also it is about what the company creates and produces. The closest example we can think of is the Phoenix Dance Company which according to Adair (2007) has seen a very difficult beginning, but through creativity and innovation this Black company has survived. Peter Badejo's company Badejo Arts<sup>10</sup> is another successful story to compare with Adzido. It must be stated clearly that an artist can be a cleaner but not all cleaners can be artists. The point here touches on the process of creativity and innovation, not in the area of ethnic dance, but in the area of theatrical dance performance which seemed to be lacking at the beginning of Adzido's life and operations. There is context to all of this. First, we must understand that the Ghanaian notion of dance as a communal activity and its principles may have restricted these practitioners from embracing change and adopting contemporary elements in their forms. Secondly, their British audiences, who had already accumulated much experience of watching theatrical dances on stage, may have developed a perception of what constitutes a theatre dance performance that is stage worthy. With this in mind, one can conclude that practitioners of dance, no matter what their background, have a responsibility of making sure that the language they speak with their art form is familiar to their audiences; and consideration of this appeared to be less significant in the choreographic pieces of Adzido.

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<sup>10</sup> Badejo Arts was founded in 1990 by the dancer and scholar Peter Badejo. By blending traditional Nigerian dance with British contemporary dance, this company established itself at the cutting edge of contemporary African dance. It has consistently pushed forward the frontiers of African dance performance through an array of activities ranging from school workshops, youth dance projects and intensive training for professionals to innovative full length productions ([www.badejoarts.com](http://www.badejoarts.com)).

The above observation, nonetheless, does not in any way reduce Adzido to a company without focus. Of course, their choreographers and the entire membership of the company knew and understood in Ghanaian and African sense what they were giving to British society in terms of dance performance. Audiovisual documentations including *African Traditions* (2000), *Home Coming* (1988), *Thand Abantwaa* (1996) and *Under African Skies* (1994) still stand as a living testimony of Ghanaian and African dance performances delivered in Britain by Adzido. The real point is that theatrical dance production in Britain can be very sophisticated and its evaluation often influenced by value judgement perhaps with or without consideration of the sociocultural background of the producers. Commenting on the effects of racism on dance in Britain, Grau (2008) explains,

Looking at dance production in Britain, one can see that some dance forms are perceived as having an existence independent of the sociocultural background of the various individuals involved, while in other cases, people often conflate the choreographers' backgrounds and the aesthetic underlying their dance works. The emphasis is different, depending on whether individuals are perceived to be aligned or nonaligned with a 'mainstream' artistic practice (Grau 2008, 239).

This orientation from Grau provides a deeper understanding of Adzido's performances and how they were or may have been perceived depending on whether their performances were considered as 'mainstream' artistic practice or any thing less than that. I would argue that while Adzido's performances were designed to represent Ghanaian and African modes of traditional dance performance, this may have been regarded by their British audiences as exotic, perhaps based on the level of theatricalisation and not necessarily movement quality, style and cultural significance. Another part of the argument may consider critical thoughts whose enquiry may want to find out what constitutes 'mainstream' artistic performance and who sets the criteria for



evaluation. These issues were some of the complexities Adzido may have had to deal with in an attempt to make an impact in British society. Buckland (2006) summarises it below,

Performances of traditional dances in international festivals and in tourist displays owe much to a twin embracing of the powers of nostalgia and exoticism. Audience and performers are locked in a manually constitutive framework of interpretation and appreciation in which they, the modern, gaze at dance, the tradition. In this respect dance is emblematic of another culture or another past that the audience cannot access through normal travel. As such, the art of dancing has become a piece of repertoire, an object of aesthetic appreciation and a symbol of a way of life (Buckland 2006, 14-15).

#### **7.14. Issues of Representation**

Having delved into elements that constitute Africa both geographically and culturally at the beginning of this chapter, it is very obvious that cultural representation of Africa as a continent can never be effectively done by a single dance group. In terms of representation, Adzido began with Ghanaian traditional dances in four different categories namely, war dances such as *Atsiagbekor* and *Gadzo* of the Anlo-Ewe; cult/religious dances such as *Sowu* of the Anlo-Ewe and *Akom* of the Akans; social dances including *Gahu* of the Anlo-Ewe and *kpalongo* of the Ga people of Accra; and royal dances such as *Adowa* and *Fontomfrom* of the Akans. Considering the repertoire of Adzido in relation to the size of the African continent with its nations and ethnicities, one would have expected them to situate the group within a framework of Ghanaian identity. Affirmed by the name *Adzido*, (a baobab tree that a single person's arms cannot encompass), is the fact that the cultural diversity of Africa cannot be represented by a single dance company. It could be argued that the British public may not have been able to understand this in the sense that for many, Africa is a country.

Dances in Africa may perform similar functions in different cultures as noted by dance scholar Jacqui Malone such as teaching social patterns and values and helping people work, mature, praise or criticise members of the community while celebrating festivals and funerals, competing, reciting history, proverbs and poetry; and to encounter gods ( Malone, 1996, 9). There may be other similarities. For example, the notion offered by Kariamu Welsh-Asante that "African dances are largely participatory, with spectators being part of the performance" (Welsh-Asante 2004, 35) but looking at the size and the diversity of cultures in the continent of Africa demands a focus on a small portion in order to gain deeper understanding of the culture. In the field of traditional African arts, the functions performed by the dances may be similar but what is important is the fact that, as was discussed earlier, every culture in Africa has its own set of principles and mechanisms that regulate the culture in a unique tradition that may not be the same in another culture.

Adzido later expanded its repertoire to include dances from West African countries such as *Adzogbo* from Benin, *Atsia* from Togo, *Wango* from Senegal, *Wale* from Guinea and the rest with which they fully exhibited artistically on stage the cultural diversity of the West African sub-region. Dzikunu was the artistic director of the company until 2000. He used his initiatives to bring music and dance artists from all over the African continent to work with the company. This move saw a significant development of the company with further expansion of their repertoire to cover dances from many parts of the African continent and the membership increased up to thirty dancers and musicians employed on a full time basis who began embracing a rounded production format basically showcasing different types of African traditional dances. Company publicity material in 1985 stated,

Dzikunu was born into the Ewe community in Ghana and was steeped in the rituals and symbols of his group's traditions. He was able to crystallise his own values through movement and music and later in his own professional company, was able to utilise his spirituality in creating work for the stages in England. He shared ideas and concepts that increased awareness and highlighted the spirituality of traditional African values.<sup>11</sup>

It may be argued that Dzikunu's Anlo-Ewe background of using dance to reinforce social ethics and moral state of living had largely influenced the Company's productions. Although some of the dances and styles have changed and evolved, the purpose of dancing remained the same- to convey a story or feeling. The drum also remained the primary instrument associated with African dances and the one significant element tying many dancers' rhythms together. Since the dancing is usually spontaneous and occasionally unpredictable, the drum's importance is very high given the fact that it ties the raw emotion exuded from one dancer to another. It is worth noting here that some African societies do not rely on drums as their main musical resource as there is a countless number of percussion instruments that can be used to provide music for the dance depending on the ethnic groups as well as their cultural tradition. Adzido therefore, can be said to have deviated from their aim of representing their home culture and rather became a formidable force that augmented the artistic efforts of earlier Black dance companies including MAAS Movers, Ekome and Kokuma –African and Caribbean dance groups that were in existence prior to the formation of Adzido.

It may be argued that the premature exit of Dzikunu in 2000 may have had a significant impact on the Company in terms of their choreographic styles and general stage performance. At the various meetings that I had with him in Accra and in London, Dzikunu gave much orientation

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<sup>11</sup> Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble, Publicity and Promotional Material (1985, 1) as cited in Ramdhanie (2005, 195).

into dance practice in Britain, using his experience with Adzido. Although he understood and acknowledged that contemporary elements will inevitably form a significant part of traditional African dance performance in Britain, Dzikunu was not ready to transform what was considered as a Pan-African group into a contemporary dance company. Built on Anlo-Ewe wisdom and philosophy by the virtue of its name, Adzido's success could not be realised in Britain without combining Ghanaian/Anlo-Ewe indigenous knowledge and British modern knowledge in their productions. The new management may have tried to capture some Ghanaian and African indigenous elements into their later choreographies but arguably, these representations may have reinforced Western stereotypes of African cultures. Indeed Adair (2007) has commented that Adzido was an "African Ensemble of twenty-eight dancers, funded by the Arts Council, that had become the example of 'Black British' dance that was promoted and that reinforced stereotypes of Black arts" (2007, 98). Although Adair's comment was based on earlier reviews of Adzido, it is possible to conclude here that it was indeed a very complex situation of entertainment versus arts in a contest of articulating African Peoples' knowledge and values in Britain through dance.

Many dance practitioners and scholars have made reference to Adzido from different ideological perspectives in their works. Grau's article 'Dance and The Shifting Sands of Multiculturalism'(2008) which touches among other things on the chronology of events as well as factors that contributed to the economic crises of Britain in the late 1970s leading to change of government, describes Adzido's stage works as "exuberant performances that were enjoyed by their audiences" (Grau 2008, 234). Grau's view was based on the way Adzido's work was generally reviewed. Hilary Carty writes "Adzido sought to mould the traditional dances around a theme or poetry, creating a more epic style with a company of over 30 dancers and musicians"

(Carty, 2007, 19); while dance scholar Bonnie Rowell (2000) locates Adzido's representations within African traditions with emphasis on "roots, homeland and difference" (Rowell 2000, 190). Although I will be referring to this issue of representation in my last chapter, it is important to state here that mass commodification of dance and its related arts may have virtually reduced Adzido to a low status of an entertainment group just as in the case of its predecessor, Les Ballet Nègres. Nahachewsky (2011) has observed that earlier discourses on dance were focused solely on Western theatrical style to the detriment of all other forms. He writes,

Earlier writers devoted to the elite Western theatrical traditions sometimes include a chapter on 'primitive' or 'folk' dance in their surveys of dance history. In these chapters however, they tend to marginalise the phenomena as 'crude,' 'simple,' 'exotic,' and 'artless'-often simply an evolutionary starting point which was left far behind when 'real,' 'important,' 'beautiful' dance (usually meaning ballet and contemporary) progressed to its lofty heights (Nahachewsky 2011, 1).

Nahachewsky's observation informs this work with a conscious effort to advance scholarly work of documentation of the significant contribution of Black and African dance groups including Adzido to dance performance and cultural education in Britain.

### **7.15. Issues of Documentation**

Throughout their 20 years of operation in Britain, one would have expected Adzido to have had thorough representation of Ghana and Africa in both electronic and print media. Newspaper reports and reviews about Adzido such as those I have mentioned earlier provide basic information about the Company. However, a full study carried out on the Company such as the in depth research Christy Adair carried out on Phoenix is yet to be produced.

Glean and Lehan (2005) have observed “while specialists in African and Caribbean dance may be part of collective history books there are to date no single volumes on key companies such as Irie!, Adzido, Kokuma or Badejo Arts” ( 2005, 10). In the case of Adzido, I argue here in consideration of its mission statement that documentation becomes the crucial element capable of articulating their relevance in contemporary Britain. Dance scholar Randy Martin (1998) has remarked that “dancing cannot, by itself, cause change in other social arenas, but clearly connections and mediations can establish a certain legacy for dance beyond the sense of its performance” (Martin 1998, 6). Adzido’s performances may have well been enjoyed by their audiences but, sadly, there was no research that could facilitate any connections and mediations into the establishment of a legacy for the art form they represented. Also, this initiative of research on Adzido could have come from within the Company as part of their staff development programme as funding was not a problem in those days. One cannot readily understand the immediate cause of these lapses, except to observe that the omission had left the review of Adzido’s performances to the mercy of British dance critics who analysed the group’s performances within a European frame work. The other side of the debate may argue that they were rather seen as a British company and not a company with Ghanaian identity. This invites the relevance of the concept of double consciousness- a situation where a Black company will create works to express White dreams. While this may have worked for a group like Adzido, does it not, at the same time, amount to giving away one’s own identity? Would that not undermine their sense of belonging and identity? Chin (2011) articulates the point using Jackson’s famous four-minute panther dance to underscore the complexity and impossibility of being a Black performer for popular audiences whose tastes and priorities are “largely constructed along the lines of white normativity” (Chin 2011, 59). Jackson in his practice

invented his own style of combining music and dance which falls within popular culture. Furthermore, he was seen as more of a celebrity rather than a mere entertainer. Dunham, on the other hand, also created and established her own African American dance technique, not only in performance but also in the field of dance education. In discussing African American dance pedagogy anthropologist Ojeya Cruz Banks (2012) identifies the primary aim of Dunham's practice. She notes, "A primary goal of her pedagogy was to cultivate positive self-esteem, intercultural understanding, community harmony and link Black people and others to an African dignity and a spiritually enriching education" (Cruz Banks 2012, 159). Cruz Banks also refers to Dunham as a dance practitioner who unified her scholarship to her activism through anthropological development of dance. Certainly, these qualities may have helped her to appeal to most audiences despite her Black background.

Positioning Adzido's case against the two African American successes reveals one significant difference. While Dunham and Jackson were African Americans born in America, Dzikunu and his group members were Africans born in Africa and relocated to Britain purposely to practise dance. In this vein one could argue that Adzido was spiritually, emotionally, psychologically, geographically, historically and culturally connected to Ghanaian traditions; and this prevented it from transforming itself into a contemporary dance company.

Although there are not many written documents serving as elements of written evidence to authenticate the significant contribution of Adzido to the diversity of cultural life in Britain; this research through field work has gathered enough evidence that validates the firm foundation laid

by this Ghanaian group as far as Black dance in Britain is concerned. In the next chapter, I discuss Adzido's influence and impact on other Black music and dance practitioners and groups as well as how their legacy became a creative energy that evolved into a curriculum model that has now been accepted into British schools for cross-cultural education.



## **Chapter 8: Anlo-Ewe Dance and Cross-Cultural Education in British Schools: The Legacy of Adzido**

### **8.1. Introduction**

The year 2012 witnessed two major events in Britain namely, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations and the London 2012 Olympic Games. My direct involvement in these special events has given me a first-hand experience of the significant role 'African dance' has played, as one of the ethnic minority arts, in celebrating the cultural diversity of Britain. For instance, I delivered practical dance workshops in major cities in England, particularly London and Manchester, as part of these two major events. This chapter examines the role of Anlo-Ewe dance in cross-cultural education in British schools drawing on the firm foundation laid by Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble. The chapter aims at documenting the role of Anlo-Ewe dance in Britain as an art form in cross-cultural education.

### **8.2. Building on the Foundation of Adzido**

Even though Adzido closed in 2004, their performances had influenced a number of institutions and individuals who made sure that the African cultural traditions continued in Britain. One of these individuals is Atsu Awoonor, a Ghanaian who worked in London as a music teacher from 1990 to 2000. Awoonor's passion for Ghanaian traditional music and dance compelled him to watch the performances and training sessions of Adzido in their last few years. In all these years, he observed the company for many purposes including learning to play the drums and other instruments, learning the songs and few dance steps as well as learning how to repair drums. At one time Awoonor became the repairer of their drums and other percussion instruments. During

this time, he started running an African Drumming Club in Houndsfields Primary School in Enfield where he worked as a music teacher.

In 2000, this Ghanaian music teacher retired from teaching and formed Venavi Drums, a limited company that delivers educational workshops in African music and dance. As discussed in Chapter 7, Adzido focused more on performance with little attention to workshops in schools and local communities. This could be counted as the main factor which made the company's work less visible in educational settings such as schools and art galleries. Realising that there was a gap in the provision of cultural education, Venavi Drums endeavoured to fill it with their operations in schools. When Adzido closed in 2004, Venavi Drums tried to recruit some of the members to work in schools but was unsuccessful due to the fact that these drummers and dancers did not have the required British teaching skills to be able to transfer their knowledge and skills to students or to lead a dance workshop in British educational settings. This was at a crucial time when Venavi Drums' work became popular and was serving twenty-one schools a week on a contract basis. The pressure pushed the founder and director, Atsu Awoonor to recruit a suitable artist from Ghana; and I was recruited and brought to Britain basically to teach Ghanaian drum music and dance in schools. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, George Dzikunu the founder and artistic director of Adzido, drafted my artist contract with Venavi Drums and later facilitated the application of my work permit visa which enabled me to relocate from Ghana to work as a dance artist in Britain.

### **8.3. Awoonor Drumming Technique**

Atsu Awoonor has designed and used a unique technique for teaching Ghanaian drum music in British schools, since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This technique has three main stages. The first stage deals with the correct positioning of the hands on the drum, the second stage focuses on how to get a quality sound for the music and the third stage concerns how to play together in a group. By far, this technique has proven to be the most simple and comprehensive one that sees even first time participants playing music they fully enjoy. The whole exercise motivates the participants as well as generates competition among them with a high level of discipline that leads them to be well focused on harnessing their music potential. The OFSTED Report

<sup>1</sup> below captures some elements in Awoonor technique and labels it as an 'example of outstanding practice'.

#### **Example of outstanding practice!**

Lessons in African drumming provide pupils with good role models and examples of a disciplined approach to learning new musical skills. High expectations of concentration and behaviour set the scene for very good learning throughout the lesson. Pupils fully understand what is expected of them and paid very good attention to the teacher. Learning intentions are very clearly explained and pupils respond very well to the teacher's calm and firm management. The teacher never raises his voice, and his words are measured and chosen carefully so that pupils are in no doubts about his expectations. Instructions are very carefully given and pupils concentrate very well. Their contributions are evaluated thoughtfully and teacher praises them, not only for the standard of their performance but also for the level of effort and improvement. Pupils behave extremely well and are calm and controlled like the teacher. They are pleased by their own work and feel proud of themselves (Prince of Wales Primary School, Enfield, EN3 6HG. OFSTED report, Sept. 2003).

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<sup>1</sup> A report produced by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), the non-ministerial governmental department that inspects schools in England.

The above report reveals certain qualities in Awoonor technique and I will attempt to discuss them right away. First, the high level of concentration that emanates from behaviour management is highlighted as the main element that sets the scene for what the report describes as very good learning. Although other elements such as team work, collaboration, self appreciation, creativity, team building, and coordination characterise the workshop, these elements can never be credited without talking about the teacher's commitment. The report constantly makes reference to the teacher- the artist whose unique approach could be counted as the vehicle capable of driving a class through a successful lesson. At this point, it is obvious that not only the Ghanaian/ African music with its dance is capable of making impact in British schools but also the quality of performance from the teacher. Who is the teacher in this report? What is his background and source of training? The teacher, Atsu Awoonor, is an Anlo-Ewe who had his music and teacher training education in Ghana. It is very interesting to note here that Awoonor's music education in Ghana was dominated by European genres including piano and brass ensemble without any Ghanaian and African percussive experience. As a result, the inventor of Awoonor technique did not have advance level skills in drumming before relocating to Britain as a classroom teacher in 1990. Although the British colonial educational system in Ghana prevented Awoonor from advancing education in his childhood activities of drumming and dancing, once in England, he found that sense of reunion with his cultural heritage in the performances of Adzido. In addition to that he rediscovered a sense of belonging and identity when he began to learn to play drums, as it was a way of regaining his socio-political, economic and cultural power that had been once snatched from him. Simply put, the teacher is a product of Adzido.

Venavi Drums deserves praise for laying this strong foundation in the teaching of Ghanaian/African music. Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning here that despite all these praise lavished on Atsu Awoonor and his company, Venavi Drums, in my critical examination of their projects were engaged in teaching only the musical component, making the art form incomplete. My response to this gap was to teach the art form in a holistic style- combining its music, dance, storytelling and dramatic enactment. One week after my arrival in Britain, I had taught Anlo-Ewe music and dances in ten schools in North London, an experience which made me realise that Adzido had already laid a foundation by taking Anlo-Ewe social dances such as *Gahu*, *Gota*, *Agbadza*, and *Tokoe* into some of these schools.

#### **8.4. Gathering Experience from other Practitioners**

My first attempt to teach these Anlo-Ewe dances in British schools presented many issues that challenged my position as an Ewe tradition keeper. These issues include, the appropriateness of a particular dance type for a certain year group, the relevance of historical background of the dance to the curriculum, whether or not a particular dance movement qualifies to be taught in a British school environment, the need for inclusion and expected outcomes. I had developed a paradigm in Ghana that, as a tradition keeper, my duty is to protect the values in the various dance forms by keeping their 'original movements' untouched even in using them to create new works. This was based on the belief that modification of a dance movement results in the loss of its meaning and significance. In my various pre-lesson discussions, Awoonor, who was very experienced in the business of teaching Ghanaian drum music in British schools, gave me orientation as to how my dance workshops could be presented to serve the needs of all pupils as well as the curriculum requirements.

Before I presented any of these Anlo-Ewe dances to the pupils, I often did all the movements in the dance while Awoonor would be watching with interest and often chose which movements would work and which ones were not needed. No matter how uncomfortable I was in this process of rearranging and modifying Anlo-Ewe dances, an act that contravenes the cultural norms that see the art form as a living history of the people, the underlying point demonstrates realistically that Britain and Ghana are two different environments. Working with Venavi Drums for two years had given me the opportunity to combine the Awoonor technique with my own evolving approach, thus making possible the use of Anlo-Ewe music and dance in cross-cultural education in Britain.

### **8.5. Working with other UK based Companies**

In my practice as a free lance artist, a number of UK based groups, companies and organisations arranged and sent me to schools and communities to deliver dance workshops. They include, Agudze Dance Ensemble in East London, Wise Moves in Hampshire, Trap Media in Milton Keynes, Afiba Arts (Efua Sey Cultural Academy) in Essex, Lingua Franca Agency in Manchester, Manchester Music Service, Manchester Arts Gallery, Youth Dance England, Noviha in London, Togo Union in London, Manchester University's Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Roehampton in London and African Arts in Knutsford. I will now present a brief overview of these organisations and the specific role I played in the workshops they arranged for me.

Agudze Dance Ensemble is a Ghanaian traditional dance company, founded in 1983 by George Fiawoo and Christine Ahiagbede after holding dance sessions initially at the Caribbean Progressive Association Centre in Walthamstow, East London in 1982. The purpose for the establishment of the group was to develop and educate the community about the cultural heritage of Africa and to positively promote diversity. Over the years, the group has grown to include work with the public, for both adults and children. The group has also organised workshops for young people to raise their performance level to compliment the adult group. Agudze Dance Ensemble has performed at various events and venues and organised workshops in schools and community centres all over London.

I featured Agudze Dance Ensemble's annual programme of drumming and dancing workshops which were held at Boundary Road Estate, Walthamstow. In these workshops, I delivered drumming sessions, dance sessions, storytelling and mask making sessions in the summer of 2007 and 2008. With regular funding provided by London borough of Waltham Forest, the workshops were held on Thursdays from 5pm to 7pm during which time I worked collaboratively with George Fiawoo and Christine Ahiagbede.

Wise Moves is a performing arts company established in November, 2000 that provides performing arts services including dance, music, drama and visual art workshops to schools throughout England and Wales. The dance workshops they offer are labeled continentally as Asian, African, Australian, the Caribbean, and European forms. Although their administrative headquarters are in Hampshire, their artists are located throughout England and Wales. I was

engaged to play the role of dance specialist in African forms between 2007 and 2009. Apart from normal school dance workshops, Wise Moves launched a performance project dubbed 'Planet Steps' under which pupils from different schools would gather in one particular school to perform different kinds of choreographic pieces. I choreographed short dance pieces using Ghanaian/Ewe material in line with the company's focus of cultural education in Extended Schools, working with disengaged pupils and pupils with Special Needs to ensure inclusion.

Trap Media is a company that delivers workshops in a range of arts and cultural activities to schools as well as corporate organisations. Their activities include team building drumming workshops and dance workshops of various genres including those from India, Africa, and Australia. They also do storytelling, mask making and instrument making. My role with Trap Media was using African hand drumming as an inspiring team-building tool. These fun drumming workshops established a sense of team building and unity among pupils of diverse background in British schools.

Efua Sey Cultural Academy is an organisation based in Essex that promotes cultural diversity for social cohesion and fosters community development through African performing arts and culture. Their workshops are tailored to suit schools, libraries, play centres and other venues where children and young people of diverse cultural backgrounds are given practical lessons on some aspects of African culture including cloth printing, cooking, drum music, dance, poetry, folksongs, games and story-telling. I offered my services as a dance and drumming workshop leader voluntarily to this organisation between 2007 and 2008 (The organisation was then known



as Afiba Arts). During this period, I was occasionally invited to lead a group of young people of diverse cultural backgrounds from different local schools in African drumming, dancing and singing. Efua Sey Cultural Academy focuses on promoting a high level of appreciation of Ghanaian and African culture in order to build bridges of understanding and acceptability among children and young people within the multicultural Essex and London communities.

Manchester Music Service is a division of Manchester City Council's education service that hires music teachers to deliver a wide range of vocal and instrumental tuition that draws from many music genres including African, Asian and South American. Senior music teachers are contracted by this institution to help identify school musical needs and offer appropriate support and training where they are required. Manchester Music service offers different kinds of music lessons, from basic to advanced level with large groups and whole classes. I was hired to teach African drums and other percussive instruments in 6 primary schools and 4 high schools within the Manchester metropolis. In this role, I went further to introduce dance to these schools which brought understanding to the students about the marriage between music and dance in Africa. Between 2010 and 2011, I delivered Anlo-Ewe music and dance workshops in these schools on a weekly basis and also organised and staged performances with the students during Black History month celebrations as well as at other educational and social events including summer festivals details of which I will be discussing later.

Youth Dance England is a national dance organisation that delivers dance training programmes that inspire and raise aspirations of young and emerging dance artists in England. Their programmes provide essential platforms for engaging young people in dance from first steps to training for a professional career. In July, 2011, Youth Dance England engaged me to deliver West African/Ghanaian dance workshops to about 120 young dancers in London. The one week residency project whose aim was to increase dance opportunities for children and young people on a national and international scale took place at the University of Roehampton. My role on this project produced choreographic pieces of African distinctiveness that draw mainly on the Ghanaian and Anlo-Ewe movement vocabulary; and these were performed by the participants.

Noviha is an Ewe social organisation established in London in 1981 to create a sense of belonging for members, promote well-being and advocate self-reliance for Ewes, their families and friends in Britain. In 2009 and 2012, during the celebrations of Hogbetsotso festival which commemorates the exodus and dispersal of the Anlo-Ewe from Notsie, I was invited to serve as a musician, choreographer and performer. In these experiences I rearranged Anlo-Ewe dances and put on stage using the children of Anlo-Ewe immigrants as the dancers.

Working with the aforementioned organisations presented a unique opportunity of gathering knowledge, skills and expertise from different specialities of music and dance; and this gradually enriched my own style which metamorphosed into *Hesu* Technique. *Hesu* is an Anlo-Ewe terminology referring to a creative energy that generates music and dance in particular, and

performing arts in general. The choice of *Hesu* as the name of my evolving technique has to do with its underlying cultural forms including music, movement, cosmology, philosophy, storytelling and folklore. The experience gathered from different companies and practitioners differentiates my approach from that of other African dance practitioners in Britain. The distinction here is that, while other African dance creations in London may focus on movement and its significance, *Hesu* technique extends its scope beyond that to include consideration of all the cultural elements that constitute the dance and their relationship with the custodians of the art form.

#### **8.6. Anlo-Ewe Dance Workshops in Britain**

Anlo-Ewe music and dance became the main activity of my school and community workshops with a special interest in two main purposes. These are, harnessing Anlo-Ewe dance in British society as an art form in cultural education for pupils from diverse cultural backgrounds; and using Anlo-Ewe dance as an expression of cultural freedom, empowerment, transformation, healing and awareness to the Black and Ghanaian/Ewe community in Britain.

With the help of the different organisations mentioned earlier, I have delivered dance workshops in more than two hundred schools during the period between 2007 and 2012. My analysis will not cover the over two hundred schools simply because, not all of these schools had experienced Anlo-Ewe dances in their workshop sessions. I delivered workshops in other Ghanaian dance forms including *Kpalongo* of the Ga people, *Damba Takai* of the Dangomba people and *Kpatsa* of the Ada people. For the scope of this research, I will discuss only a few examples of Anlo-

Ewe dance workshops under three groups namely: Workshops in Primary Schools, Workshops in High Schools and Colleges and Workshops in Universities.

### **8.7. Workshops in Primary Schools**

The dance workshops in primary schools aim to get pupils to learn about and do Anlo-Ewe dance styles under the broader term 'African dance'. In primary schools, this general term is widely used and accepted although in my practice I often stress the fact that all Africans do not dance the same way and therefore it is necessary for pupils to identify the dance form with its specific African group. *Tokoe* was the main Anlo-Ewe dance I used in most primary schools. This choice was based on the fact that *Tokoe* dance is simple to teach and also its educational nature allows it to be recreated to serve any form of educational purpose. Unlike a cult dance such as *Yeweh* dance which cannot be taken out of its cultural context, *Tokoe* provides the flexibility for modification without any cultural barriers. In Ghana, *Tokoe* is performed in its traditional context as a social dance with movements depicting activities of teenage girls going through puberty rites. In British schools, I did not only rearrange the movements but also I removed those that are considered inappropriate. For example, hand gestures in various cultures communicate to the people. However, it is important to be aware that communication by gestures tends to be culturally defined. Therefore, gestures that may communicate a positive message in Ghana may send a negative signal or a message of insult in London. I further modified the few selected movements to conform to what is accepted in the school curriculum in terms of body exercise in Physical Education which is the umbrella subject under which dance is placed in Britain.

The recreated version of *Tokoe* has five simple movements. 1. Left hand moves forward and back, signifying the employment of spirit of obedience in following the instructions of parents. 2. Right hand moves forward and back, signifying employment of spirit of obedience in following the instructions of teachers. 3 Left hand waves to the side, signifying the acknowledgment of neighbours on the left. 4. Right hand waves to the side, signifying acknowledgement of neighbours on the right. 5. The whole body in a low position with rolling of hands in a wiggle that signifies how Anlo-Ewes wash their clothes by hand.

The above five simple movements in the recreated or somewhat revised version of *Tokoe* dance basically provide a medium through which children understand the need to obey and respect authority as well as look at their neighbours as part of the community. Not only do these children learn to understand these virtues, but also they practise them in school and at home with the focus on the point that without neighbours, parents and teachers, one cannot establish a community. *Tokoe* therefore, has the potential to shape behaviour patterns of the pupils in order that they may grow and become responsible adults. Additionally, the recreated *Tokoe* highlights the Anlo-Ewe practice of the employment of dance as a motivational tool in performing daily activities. In view of the fact that Anlo-Ewe moral teachings are embedded in dance, in recreating my UK version of *Tokoe* for primary school pupils, I incorporated such values into it in an attempt to speak to the pupils through the dance. Amegago (2011) notes, "Certain elements of the so-called authentic African music and dance may later be abandoned while new elements may be incorporated" (Amegago, 2011, 93). Amegago's notion resonates in my recreation of *Tokoe*. A movement in a Ghanaian dance may contain some elements that define the dance in its

cultural context but, once these 'authentic' elements are removed, the movement assumes a new meaning which changes the context of the dance.

In October, 2011, I introduced the new *Tokoe* dance at a Church of England Aided Primary School in County Durham as part of Black History Month Celebration. The head teacher was among the first group of people who helped offload all the 30 African drums and other materials from the van and carried them to the hall allocated to the workshop. The day officially began with a colourful assembly led by the resident vicar who touched the hearts of the already excited children with his word of exhortation after which he introduced me as the special guest artist. Being a white dominated area, it was amazing to find pupils staring at the African drums with a good number of them asking permission to try their hands on them. The excitement culminated into a euphoric atmosphere under which the entire workshop was delivered. I worked with year two class (7year olds). The pupils loved the dance because of its historical background which I earlier presented to them in a story of how a young girl was captured by the African dwarves following her disobedience to authority. After lunch time I gave them the basic skills in drumming with which they provided the *Tokoe* music. Later, they were taken through the dance movements and their significance. At 2.30 pm, the whole school returned to the hall where they were entertained by the year two pupils in a full *Tokoe* performance; the dance, song and drumming. It all ended at 3pm with much appreciation from parents who came to collect their children.

## 8.8. Workshops in High Schools

Workshops in high schools took the form of an hour lecture on what is considered as dance in Africa; an hour session of warming-up exercises, using *Hesu* Technique, an hour session of singing and playing drums and other Anlo-Ewe percussive instruments; and an hour session of working in large and small groups on a selected Anlo-Ewe dance forms. The climax of the day would be a performance either in large groups or small groups of 4-6 dancers doing Anlo-Ewe dance to an audience, including some invited parents.

Below is a sample time table:

### **African Dance Workshop Timetable- St. Aidan's C/E Technology College**

**DATE:** Thursday, 13 October, 2011

**THEME:** Exploring and Celebrating the Culture of African People through Dance.

**FACILITATING ARTIST:** KWASHIE

**CRB NO.**001253941747

SESSION	TIME	CLASS	VENUE	ACTIVIY
1	9.00-10.00	The Whole School	The Main Hall	Introduction: An hour presentation on Music and Dance of African People.
2	10.15-11.15	Year 8 (13-14year olds)	Main Hall	Warm up with 'Hesu Technique'
3	11.15-12.15	Year 8	Main Hall	Singing and

				Drumming
4	13.15-14.15	Year 8	Main Hall	Learning and Doing African Dance(Gahu dance from Ghana)
5	14.30-15.00	Year 8	Main Hall	Performance

In the summer of 2011, a High School for Girls in Manchester celebrated a multicultural day with a display of many cultures. Twenty-eight students represented Africa with drumming, singing and dancing. This group comprised of 20 % white British pupils, 5% Africans and 75% Asians. These girls did very well in the workshop sessions and were selected to be part of their big exhibition in the afternoon. All other groups displayed their paraphernalia on tables except the African group whose drums maintained a consistent blend of different rhythms while some girls were responding with the appropriate dance movements just as it is done in Africa. Incredibly, the stand allocated to the African group became a stage and all other exhibition groups became the audience, who could not stop watching the spectacular performance on display.

### **8.9. Workshops in Universities.**

At a university level, the term 'African dance' without qualification was questionable; and therefore needed unpacking and contextualisation. As a result, there was the need to design it as a course with learning objectives and outcomes. At the University of Roehampton, it was



considered as the African segment of a module called World Music and Dance. My experience with primary schools, high schools and colleges gave me a wealth of experience in workshop delivery but, the experience at the university was totally new to me. The difference here touches on the fact that in primary schools, I worked with pupils, who were not studying dance as a subject whereas in the university, I worked with dance students who were studying dance as an academic course in higher education hence the need for a course design with stated aims and outcomes.

In Ghanaian music and dance ensemble, members must understand the interrelationship of their parts in the performance with other ensemble members (Agordoh, 2005; Locke, 2002; Nketia, 1974). These scholars have explored the high level of attention performers devote to the precision of music and its corresponding dance movements. Their views find a space in the model I designed in teaching Ghanaian/Anlo-Ewe dance at a university level. Vocalisation of drum language has been used to familiarise the students with the music under which they were able to listen to fixed drum texts and respond with the appropriate dance movements. The primary purpose of the drum in African societies was communication and this has been utilised in my teachings where the drum became the commander for the dancers.

In designing a model for my practice in the university environment, I adopted the curriculum designs of Adinku (1994) and Amegago (2011) as the foundation. Adinku's Bachelor of Arts in Dance curriculum model which draws on Susan Walther's (1979) model of dance description, interpretation and evaluation has its objectives. These include familiarising students with the functions of dance within the traditional African cultures and to provide them with the basis for

participation in, and appreciation and understanding of the cultural context of dance and to utilise cultural dance forms as a tool for their own creativity.

Amegago's technique offers a simple but comprehensive mode that provides deeper understanding of the theories of curriculum, art education, creativity, creative processes in Ewe music and dance. It also provides the teacher and students with analytical, evaluative and appreciative skills relating to cross cultural performing arts education; and most importantly Amegago's technique uses an interdisciplinary approach in a holistic style that conceptualises Ewe/African music and dance in both theory and practice. Drawing on these earlier works, I designed the model below which became my first tool with which I delivered sessions at colleges and universities including the University of Roehampton in 2011, 2012 and 2013 as part of the World Music and Dance module.

#### **8.10. Features of Hesu Model of West African Dance Course**

The model provides opportunities for students to learn a variety of Ghanaian/Ewe dance and musical forms in their cultural contexts. The course combines theory and practice. Students are introduced to the cultural contexts of Ghanaian/Anlo-Ewe performances: their social, religious/ceremonial, economic, political and stylistic bases and selected Anlo-Ewe music and dance forms. They also play Ghanaian/Ewe musical instruments, such as bells, rattles and drums, sing and dance in small and large groups. Students are also required to answer questions on the various topics and keep reflective journals of their learning experiences throughout the semester. They also have opportunities to perform in the middle and at the end of the semester.

The main aims of the model are; by the end of the semester, students will understand the cultural context of African music and dance, develop skills in performing, improvising and creating African and African related dance and music, acquire analytical, evaluative and appreciative skills relating to West African music and dance, exhibit their performance skills through midterm and end of semester performances, demonstrate their ability to apply these knowledge and skills to their future education, performance, research and careers.

Students are evaluated on their involvement in the class activities, such as instrumental performance, singing, dancing and their contribution to class discussions. Dancing is evaluated on the mastery of movements (movement qualities, performance skills, attitude and progress), based on the exhibition of the appropriate posture, proper execution of movements, the flow, dynamics and timing of the movements; emotional/facial expression and proper coordination of the movement with the music. Singing is evaluated on the proper rendition of the melodies, personal involvement and proper coordination with instrumental sounds. Instrumental music is evaluated on the mastery of the playing techniques, proper handling of instruments, proper articulation of musical sounds, coordination with other instrumental sounds, knowledge of linguistic and cultural contexts of sounds. Materials that form the content of the Hesu model draw largely on Amegago's (2011) Curriculum Design for Teaching the African Performing Arts.

Students are given assignments in a form of written papers where they are evaluated on clarity, validity, coherence, grammatical structure and the quantity of information they contain. They are also encouraged to reflect on their learning process as part of the written assignments. The practical component of this model requires students to put together a creative piece known as

'Final Choreography'. The final choreography is evaluated on students' ability to utilise the movement vocabulary they have learned during the semester in combination with other movements to create a coherent, artistic and meaningful piece that blends together music, dance and other related components. This model is mainly a studio course and students are expected to attend all classes promptly and participate in all activities, such as dancing, singing, playing of instruments as well as written and practical assignments.

Students are allowed to wear any comfortable clothes ranging from African clothes, loose pants, leotards and T-shirts but they are expected to dance bare foot. This is not only because most African dances are done bare foot but also because there are some Ghanaian dances including *Klama* of the Ga Adangbes that emphasise movement of the toes. Jewelry should not be worn in class for they may harm students when dancing. Long hair must be tied securely off the face to enable the dancer to concentrate and move freely. These arrangements form the basic guidelines of the course and are in line with health and safety measures and risk management undertaken before the design of the model. Although this is a full term/semester course, it has never been taught throughout the term. Two factors account for this- its location within another course and lack of funding which reduced it gradually to a one off event. While Ewe dance in the university community has struggled to make some impact, its relevance as well as acceptance in primary and secondary schools has been phenomenal.



34. Students in Agbadza dance with Kwashie Kuwor (my self)



35. Drumming session as part of Black History Month.

### **8.11. Comparing Anlo-Ewe Technique to Non-African Forms in British Schools**

In the many British schools I have visited with my practice, there were many different dance forms, some of which were taught on a weekly basis, others on a monthly basis and some of them including African forms were considered as one off activities. Among these dance forms are, Ballet, Ballroom dance, Contemporary dance, Jazz dance, Modern dance, Street dance and Tap dance. In order to do a cross-cultural comparison of these non-African forms to Anlo-Ewe form, I will now adopt the views of my pupils in outlining the basic definitions and characteristics of these dances. This is not an indepth discussion of non-African forms as they are not the focus of my research. Therefore, I am very much aware that referring to them briefly in this endeavour will inevitably invite generalisations. Also, it is important to note here that although some schools had about two of these dances for example, St Aidan's Church of England Technology College in Lancashire and John Spendluffe Technology College in Lincolnshire had Ballet and Contemporary dance as part of their curriculum, no single school was found teaching all these forms.

My workshop participants in secondary schools view ballet as a formal classical dance, which originated in the Italian renaissance period and was developed further in France. Ballet utilises conventional steps, poses and graceful movements. It also includes elaborate gestures, a large amount of foot movement and suspension on the toes. Famous ballet dancers whose practices have inspired British pupils include, Maria Kochetkova, Darcey Bussell and Rudolf Nureyev.

Ballroom dance is a collection of partner dances where one partner leads and the other partner follows. There are many types of ballroom dance in British schools. These include Rumba,

Mambo, Cha-cha, Waltz, Foxtrot and swing, all of which come with their individual characteristics. Contemporary dance is a collection of modern and postmodern techniques into a creative form that works with the natural alignment and energy of the body to produce a greater range and fluidity of movement. Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham have been credited as the pioneers of contemporary dance. Jazz is an American social dance that originated at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is a stage dance that incorporates Jazz or Jazz-influenced music. Its new style emerged in the 1950s and 60s that drew on modern ballet and tap dance. Pupils draw inspiration from practitioners including Kathrine Dunham, Jack Cole and Bob Fosse.

Modern dance is a form that broke away from traditional ballet and developed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It adopts a more relaxed, free style of dance in which dancers use their emotions and mood to design their own steps and routines. Pupils are familiar with such names as Isadora Duncan, Ruth St Denis and Loie Fuller as pioneers of modern dance. Street dance is a collection of dance forms that developed outside of dance studios in the 1970s. It involves improvisation and interaction with spectators and other dancers. The common styles found in British schools are Break dancing, Popping, Locking and Krumping. Tap dance is a form that developed from American theatre dance in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and influenced by Irish clogging and African dance movements. It deals with rhythmic sound patterns.

It is important to reiterate here again that all the definitions and characteristics I have outlined on the different dance genres above are not from my own perspective, but from the perspective of the pupils who do them and are able to talk about their experience, which reflects the diversity of dance cultures that are being experienced in British schools. Also, apart from the West African

dance forms, I have very little knowledge of the other non-African forms hence the employment of the pupils' views which also stand as the views of the participating schools.

Having outlined the characteristics of the aforementioned dances against my own technique dominated by Anlo-Ewe dance, it is worthy of note that this does not intend to break the rule of comparing like to like. It is to understand the movement qualities participants of my workshops had been doing in their various schools. These movement qualities become the relevant previous dance knowledge of the pupils which a teacher may employ in teaching a new form. Influence of these non-African dance forms on my rearrangements is located in the area of movement component and its execution. I designed my movement vocabulary around the Anlo-Ewe torso manipulation. Dancer and scholar Patience Kwakwa (1994) observed that, "Anlo-Ewe of Ghana and those of neighbouring countries, the republics of Togo and Benin concentrate on movements of the upper torso in their dances" (1994, 11). Kwakwa's observation underscores how Anlo-Ewe dance forms are dominated by the strong contraction and release of the upper torso. In view of the fact that the majority of dances found in British schools do not emphasise the contraction and release of the upper torso, using *Hesu* technique without any modification presented a great challenge to the whole process of teaching and learning Ghanaian dance. Improvisation, which is already an integral part of African creativity, becomes the tool with which my rearrangements have been done. Tierou (1989) states, "Improvisation in Africa is not a result, as in the West, of spontaneity, but much more of the creative imagination of the improviser who applies himself to a given subject known to everybody" (1989, 19). While the employment of improvisation has enhanced my creation to an extent, the biggest challenge has been the polycentric nature of Anlo-Ewe dance where different parts of the body must collaborate in executing the full movement.



Yartey (2009) explains, "even though weight and centre are established through the pelvis and manifested in the hips, usually the various parts of the body come together to perform simultaneous movement at different times, speeds and qualities in multiple directions to harmonious organic whole"(Yartey, 2009, 256-7). These elements in Anlo-Ewe dance as articulated by Yartey's explanation are considered as vital ingredients that make the dance complete. In effect, practitioners are always cautious of keeping these vital elements according to Anlo-Ewe traditional norms. In order not to operate contrary to the Anlo-Ewe norms, I set out two themes to be explored by *Hesu* technique namely, (a) Sticking to the rules and (b) Breaking the rules. In the first part pupils are introduced to the movements and their significance after which they are taken through the rules that constitute the grammar of the dance. Significant part of the rules is listening to drum language and responding with the appropriate dance movement. In the second part, pupils are allowed to break the rules in order to allow creativity and innovation. In the creative process the drum language is replaced with recorded music to which pupils respond with their various choreographic pieces. I argue here that African dance in the diaspora always has a contemporary element to it. Therefore, if I call the first part of my *Hesu* model as a traditional or neo-traditional dance, then what is created in the second part ('breaking the rules') can be called contemporary. I also recognise that, what is known today as contemporary may become traditional tomorrow if it is maintained for a long period of time.

### **8.12. Relevance of School Workshops**

Discussing the teaching of African dance forms in North America and other diasporic communities, Amegago (2011) outlines a number of factors to consider in the notion of relevance of activities to students under the school curriculum. He asserts,

Concerning the notion of relevance, certain activities may be considered generally relevant to students' educational levels while others may be perceived as relevant to their specific developmental stages. However, what seems irrelevant today may provide a basis for future needs or undertakings; thus, ultimately everything could be relevant to a student's life. The notion of relevance is further challenged by students' exposure to the hidden curriculum (unintended or taken for granted experiences or knowledge) and other forms of knowledge through the mass media, some of which would otherwise be deemed irrelevant to specific students' educational levels. While relating the curriculum content to specific students' educational levels or contexts, a consideration should also be given to the students' past, present and future experiences and social responsibilities (Amegago 2011, 87).

Amegago's point about North American students presents a perspective that requires consideration of the past experiences of the pupils and students in Britain who are the participants in my dance workshops, their present experience and of course, their future experiences. The past experiences of ethnic minority groups in Britain may be linked to their immigrant culture which was handed to them by their parents. For example, an Anlo-Ewe child in London is likely to be immediately associated with Agbadza dance, because of his/her ethnicity, despite the fact that his /her preference may be English country dance. While their present experiences are more closely linked to the many cultures they experience in multicultural Britain today, answers to the question of how their present experiences full of diverse cultural forms can be harnessed and used in building what Prime Minister David Cameron termed 'Big Society'<sup>2</sup> becomes very crucial to their future experiences. It is a process involving a combination of enculturation and re-enculturation as a response to the challenges of acculturation. In other words, it involves learning their native cultures which is often considered as an ongoing process, as well as experiencing the many cultures in their new environment

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<sup>2</sup> David Cameron uses the term to refer to Conservative party policy idea that sought to emphasise empowerment of local communities in celebrating the diversity of cultures in Britain. See Cameron and Clegg set out 'big society' policy ideas (BBC News of 18<sup>th</sup> May, 2010).

(Britain) in order to respond to the changes and dynamisms of the 21<sup>st</sup> century globalised world of advanced technology.

Harnessing and celebrating the diversity of cultures in Britain today can be seen as one of the priority areas of British education and this is evident in the many diversity and cultural programmes that characterise the curriculum content of their schools. The relevance of my school dance workshops is linked to some special programmes on the British school calendar including International Days, Art Week, Black History Month, Enrichment Days, Global Art Days, Multicultural Days, Diversity Days and Ethnic Minority Days. Although these participants were not obliged to give information on their experience, the pupils/students through their schools have presented to me thank-you notes in the form of poems and testimonies. Below are a few examples:

*On behalf of all the students and staff at David Lewis I wanted to thank you for the fantastic workshops on Friday 2nd July. The students commented on how much they enjoyed the workshops and said they liked having the opportunity to play the drums. I thought that the workshops were well organised and well led and I liked the way you taught not only drumming, but dancing and singing as well. I felt this really made it accessible to all students. One member of support staff said that it was refreshing and great to learn something new (Year 10 teacher, October, 2010).*

The above testimony was the integration of students' appreciation of my workshop into one piece by their teacher. To put it in context, this is a special needs school full of students with different learning abilities. Although the characteristics of my workshops as revealed by this feedback include creativity, motivation, accessibility and learning of new skills, it is worth noting here that the students were just offering their appreciation and not critical comments. It also makes us understand that these students participated in the dance workshop as an

opportunity to experience something new rather than a situation where dance students will have to analyse the session and offer their own criticisms. Regardless of that, one can clearly sense one unique observation which points to the style of delivery of the workshop in a holistic form of combining drumming, dancing and singing.

*I was very impressed with the workshop. The artist Kwashie was very enthusiastic and worked extremely well with the children, he was able to motivate every single child and get them engaged in the activities. The children were able to understand the history of Africa and what African culture is all about. Towards the end of the workshop the pupils were able to put together a production which was seen by year 8 pupils. The year 8 pupils were amazed that the production was put together in one day (Josh, 22nd October, 2012).*

In the above feedback the head teacher of a high school conveyed to me the views of pupils across the whole school. Although, to the school, the most important element they could point out was inclusiveness which enabled everybody to participate, this validates my argument that Anlo-Ewe dances are largely participatory with very few or no audience. Furthermore, we can see from the pupils' perspective that, dance in Africa is connected to history, geography, music and cultural studies. Therefore, to analyse African dances, one must consider history, music, geography and the role of tradition in the various dances and the culture of the people. Firenzi (2012) asserts,

One of the more useful analytical approaches to investigating dance practices in precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial contexts is to look at the role of tradition in different dances, and how this connection to the past has or has not played a role in the manipulation of these dance practices for political or social purposes (Firenzi 2012, 404).

One significant outcome of these school workshops is the fact that many schools have begun using Anlo-Ewe dance as the main art form in celebrating Black history month in October and in the celebration of multicultural days, international days, and diversity days. Anlo-Ewe dance and

related arts in many schools in Britain have significantly served the needs of the above special events in recent years. At a secondary school in Nottingham, I spent three days working with year 8 students (12-13 year olds) as part of their Arts Week celebrations. In this experience I worked collaboratively with different artists from different parts of the world in a range of arts including, African storytelling, Indian dance, Lion dance, Designer currency, Poetry slam and word play, Chinese numbers, Food from around the world, Kabuki masks, Aboriginal dance, Samba and Bollywood. Under the discussion of elements of storytelling in Africa, the students focused on the unique model of the Anlo-Ewe. The various segments of this model include the opening of the story, the introduction of the characters, the main attraction which is the musical interlude and the closing of the story.

The whole school was stunned to see English students exploring the call, *Misegli loo* (listen to a story) by the story teller and the response, *Egli neva* (let the story come) by the listeners as the standard opening of *glitoto* (Anlo-Ewe story telling session). They also explored the call and response element in the introduction of the characters just as it is done in Anlo-Ewe tradition. As the story teller said *Egli tso wuu dze Ayiyi dzi* (the story falls on a spider), the listeners responded appropriately together by saying *wo dze dzi* (it falls on him). At the end of the celebration, students identified elements that differentiate the art of storytelling in Africa from other forms of storytelling in the world. Notable among these distinctive elements are; the unique role dance with its music plays as a way of keeping the listeners alive and attentive to the narrator, as well as harnessing the performing arts potential of the listeners; and the collaborative nature of the whole process that engages both the storyteller and his listeners in the narration. Students' experience in other art forms were also exhibited and the experience made it clear that bringing

experienced practitioners of arts from different parts of the world has a huge potential to enrich students' knowledge about the need to appreciate each other's cultures in Britain in celebrating the cultural diversity of the country.

Despite these remarkable achievements, an observation in another part of the country points to the challenges these school workshops had to go through. In a school in East Manchester, the workshop ended with a performance and it was at a time students from India were visiting in a short exchange programme. I was later asked to work with the Indian students and to put them on stage to perform for the whole school. During the rehearsal, the drum music attracted a few teachers who came closer perhaps to see how the various drum sounds were being produced. Soon the group started going through the dance movements in preparation for the performance. I was shocked when a teacher walked up to me and said, "Kwashie, can you make sure they don't dance at the assembly please?" My heart missed a beat and I asked, 'Why?' She said, "Because it's a **dignified** assembly". Although I became sad upon hearing this, my thoughts rather went deeper and deeper until I eventually came to the realisation that the teacher was sending a message to all dance practitioners that the art form still has not had enough scholarly attention to create awareness of its dignity and importance.

### **8.13. Reflections**

Gleanings from the main discussion in this chapter suggest that 'African dance' in Britain went through three stages: namely, the stage of neglect, the stage of tolerance and the stage of celebration. The next section will briefly discuss these stages.

#### **8.14. The Stage of Neglect (1951-1974)**

The beginning of this period witnessed the passing of King George VI at Sandringham and his succession by Queen Elizabeth II. The more than two decades stretch saw six prime ministers steering the political affairs of Britain: Sir Winston Churchill of the Conservative Party (1951-55); Sir Anthony Eden of the Conservative Party (1955-1957); Harold Macmillan of the Conservative Party (1957-1963); Sir Alec Douglas-Home of the Conservative Party (1963-1964); Harold Wilson of the Labour Party (1964-1970); and Edward Heath of the Conservative Party (1970-1974). Sir Winston Churchill may have enacted and implemented party policies on arts recognition and funding, but none of these policies favoured Berto Pasuka and his Ballet Nègres during his prime ministership.

The Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) was the first organization in charge of spending both charitable and public funds on the arts, under the chairmanship of the economist, John Maynard Keynes. His vision of state support for the arts was largely responsible for ensuring that CEMA evolved in 1946 ( the year Ballet Nègres was formed) into the Arts Council of Great Britain, still considered to be the first arts agency in the world to distribute government funds. Rowell (2000) observes,

Public subsidy for dance began with the Arts Council of Great Britain (ACGB), which was set up in 1946 as the result of the activities of the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) during the war years. Dance was for a long time comparatively poorly funded under the auspices of the Music Panel, with a Dance Theatre Sub-Committee (Rowell, 2000, 191).

Rowell's observation provides insight into the reality that confronted dance in Britain during the period. The point is that, if even mainstream dance was struggling to receive funding at a period the art form was beginning to see unprecedented development, then one can easily conclude that it would be a mere curiosity to expect ethnic minority dance to be harnessed and encouraged during the same period. Interestingly, the Black/African dance was growing in its activities but remained consistently underfunded, and this may account for its virtual disappearance in Britain until 1974.

#### **8.15. The Stage of Tolerance and Acceptance (1974-1990)**

This period experienced a major policy change with introduction of new laws including race and equality act under three different Prime ministers namely, Harold Wilson of the Labour Party (1974-1976); James Callaghan of the Labour Party (1976-1979); and Margaret Thatcher of the Conservative Party (1979-1990). Anthropologist Susan Wright (1998) has identified and discussed politicisation of culture as the distinction between two sets of ideas namely, old ideas and new ideas about culture. According to Wright, the old set of ideas considers a culture with a people while the new set refers to a political process of contestation over the power to define key concepts including culture itself. "Culture in both its old and new senses, has been introduced into many new domains in the 1980s and 1990s, including cultural racism and multiculturalism, corporate culture and culture and development" (Wright 1998, 14). What is significant about this period is that it marks the beginning of institutionalised multiculturalism. Although one may argue that Thatcher largely dismantled what Wilson and Callaghan started, some support was given to local authorities; and this enabled them to expand their sponsorship of small art groups,



as well as building or refurbishing regional theatres, museums and galleries, and running their own programmes and festivals. For example, between 1978 and 1980, a Dance Advisory Committee was set up as well as a Dance Panel with a direct link to the Arts Council (Rowell, 2000).

This period is the most important in all the three stages simply because it bears witness to the reemergence of 'African dance' in Britain. This time, it took the form largely of Ghanaian dance. According to King-Dorset, "every culture has an impulse to dance as an expression in response to music" (King-Dorset 2008, 39). While this assertion applies to the Anlo-Ewe culture, it may not work for all cultures as most contemporary dance performances do not respond to music. In Britain for instance, there are dance types that respond to music and also other types that do not relate to music. However, Ghanaian forms introduced by *Sankofa* may have had some influence in respect of the relationship between music and dance in Ghana. But arguably, British society's urge to dance was further boosted by the availability of funding for many dance groups in the 1980s.

Let us take a close look at the meaning and significance of the name *Sankofa* (return to your roots). It is a symbol made up of a goose image that turns its head, stretched back, attempting to pick up something thought to have been forgotten. The users of the Sankofa symbol believe Ghanaians have consciously or unconsciously neglected their cultural heritage, and the situation requires a conscious effort to go back and take that which belongs to them. Therefore *Sankofa*

could be interpreted as a return to take and develop the 'African dance' that was neglected during the time of Ballet Nègres.

Narrowing our discussion on Ghanaian dances, let us now look at how dance defines the Ghanaians as a people. Dartey Kumodzie explains: "The Ghanaian culture, also known as Ghanaian knowledge system is governed by four basic factors namely, Cosmogony and Language; Religion and Philosophy; Music and symbolism; and Arts" (Kumodzie, 2009, 12). Kumodzie argues that, before Ghana can make any socio-economic progress, these four factors must remain indigenous, yet be kept constantly dynamic. Going by this explanation offered by Kumodzie suggests that dance is the art form which contains all these vital elements that are necessary for nation building. However, his point is clear that for Ghanaians to make progress with their indigenous arts, there must be employment of creativity and innovation in order to give room to the dynamics.

#### **8.16. The Stage of Celebration and Criticism (1990-2012).**

This period began with the prime-ministership of the Conservative John Major, who led the country for seven years before losing power to Tony Blair of the Labour Party in 1997 in what could be described by political analysts as one of the Conservative Party's worst electoral defeats. Blair led his 'New Labour' Party with policies that were not only dynamic and friendly to ethnic minority groups, but also they encouraged and promoted African and Black dance in particular and minority arts in general. It was during Blair's regime for example, that Adzido's

annual funding rose from a few hundred thousand pounds to over a million. Gordon Brown succeeded Tony Blair in 2007 and worked for three years in the midst of the global financial crisis, resulting in the poor performance of the Labour Party in the 2010 general elections; and this led to the marriage of the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats who constitute Britain's current coalition government.

During this stage, two Black companies, Adzido and Phoenix were funded heavily and celebrated by Britain, both nationally and internationally. Looking at the three periods under investigation, one realises that Labour governments have always played their game well in the area of supporting the arts, no matter how small the funding. Conservatives, on the other hand, may have made some provision for the development of the arts, but whether or not those provisions were extended to the ethnic minority arts in Britain including 'African dance' is a moot point. In fact, the 1990s saw a significant shift in policy and structural adjustment in arts and culture. In 1992, for example, the re-elected Conservative government established for the first time a coordinated Ministry to deal with arts, museums, libraries, heritage, media, sport and tourism called the Department of National Heritage. Then, in 1994, a fundamental decision was taken to delegate the Arts Council of Great Britain's responsibilities and functions to three new separate bodies: the Arts Council of England, the Scottish Arts Council and the Arts Council of Wales, with each nation running its own affairs in relation to arts funding, thereby reflecting a broader trend to decentralisation.

### **8.17. Ethnic Minority Arts and Neo-liberalism**

What seems to be a significant factor in this discussion is the impact various ideologies implemented by successive governments had on the economy and their effect on arts funding. For example, Conservative governments are noted for implementing neo-liberalism, which is the direct opposite of social democratic system adopted by Labour governments. The election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979 could be seen as a turning point of British democratic dispensation. Social policy scholars Jo Cunningham and Steve Cunningham (2012) assert,

The election of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government in 1979 is often seen as a defining political moment. It is frequently thought to have signalled an end to the social democratic consensus and the beginning of a radical neo-liberal era. Conservative administrations governed Britain until 1997, and during this period, neo-liberal values permeated all areas of welfare policy including social work (Cunningham and Cunningham, 2012, 67).

Although Cunningham and Cunningham are coming from a social policy perspective, understanding of the term, neo-liberalism is vital to assessing the impact of its implementation on the arts in Britain. David Harvey (2005) defines neo-liberalism as a theory of political practices that proposes that, human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills, within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. Harvey's definition holds the idea that governments ought to abstain from the economy, and instead, empower individuals to participate in free and self regulating markets.

As Wright (1998) has observed in British politics, the Margaret Thatcher led New Right which represented an alliance between liberal economic and conservative political theories,

appropriated and redefined culture. She stated, "They consciously engaged in the manipulation of words, especially the process of renaming and redefining key concepts. In particular the New Right focused on appropriating and reformulating the meanings of one semantic cluster – 'difference', 'nation', 'race', 'culture'" (Wright 1998, 10). Wright's study suggests political leaders under neo-liberalism often have the power to determine what concepts and ideas are appropriate to define culture.

Neo-liberalism emphasises notions of public choice, contestability and property rights (Peters, 2001). It involves very little government intervention while recognising the supremacy of the private market and individuals managing their own affairs. In clear terms, the adoption of neo-liberalistic ideas in governing Britain has always been under the idea of empowering local institutions and individuals. This ideology is not new to Britain; it dominated the economy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, where Poor Laws were developed to represent conditional welfare for the few under the Poor Law Commission of 1832-34 (Townsend, 1979; Cunningham and Cunningham, 2012). There was a general belief among the leading elites of the time that poverty was necessary as a motivation for the labouring poor to work, while pauperism was considered a moral defect rather than poverty.

The neo-liberal approach could be credited for making a distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor (Fitzpatrick, 2011). Furthermore, virtue was carefully connected with work, emphasising less income for those who were not at work. The unemployed had to show some eagerness for work to secure those minimum rights.

The neo-liberalistic ideology resurfaced again in Britain during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Its legacy was visible in the Conservative governments of the 1980s and 90s, and its justification was the famous declaration from the former conservative Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher that "There is No Alternative (TINA)"<sup>3</sup>. Neo-liberalistic features in the British system currently include, less government intervention, more private and self participation, reducing fraud and error in the welfare system, and giving more powers to local authorities and individuals. As noted by scholars including, James Adams (2001), Neo-liberalism is not a perfect system. It has its own disadvantages especially in the area of decentralisation and decision making. This suggests that, making economic decisions in Britain may soon be limited to private individuals, and not by collective institutions; and this may lead to a denial of some individuals their right to participate in community activities. What this means is that, under the current system dominated by neo-liberalism, schools that use Black and ethnic minority arts as part of their curriculum may soon be left on their own to fund such activities instead of full government funding. The result is likely to be the gradual disappearance of Black Minority Arts in Britain. Although the neo-liberal ideology may do well in implementing government's agenda of reducing deficit in some sense, it may end up undermining government's aim of eradicating poverty and social exclusion in society. According to John Barnes (2005), a large part of income related policies of government, instead of eradicating poverty and social exclusion rather discourage people from working and draw them into the official poverty lines. It is not only lack of food that makes people poor, but also denial of people the right to participate in community activities such as dance, music and other cultural events.

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<sup>3</sup> See Claire Berlinski (2008, 27)

In 2007, Tony Blair's Labour government introduced a scheme called 'The Quality Culture Project', which proposed that every child in Britain should experience some form of artistic activity, be it music, dance, drama, poetry, creative writing or painting. This project, which was fully funded by the government, gave a further boost to the ethnic minority arts, including Ghanaian dance, in Britain.

Regardless of the current downward trend in funding community activities the 'African dance' continues to serve the needs of multicultural Britain. But for its existence to be maintained, practitioners regardless of their funding status will have to be more creative and innovative in their dance practices. In the case of African forms such as the Ghanaian and Anlo-Ewe forms, the more encompassing nature they remain with their drumming, story telling and dramatic enactment, the more attractive they become in British society. It is also evident in the many workshops I delivered that people become more interested when the delivery assumes a multi-dimensional role of providing entertainment, cultural education, history, geography and performance.

The Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations took place all over the country in the summer of 2012 with workshops and performances involving schools and communities. In many of these workshops, Ghanaian dance was given a chance to operate, and this provided the opportunity of educating the British public and; as a result, an added flavour to the diversity of British society. In Knutsford, Crewe and many other communities in Cheshire, Agbadza dance and other Anlo-Ewe art forms were accepted and used in the two major events of the year 2012 (The Queen's

Diamond Jubilee and Cultural Olympia) whose participants included, children, young people, the youth and elderly. Special participants were community leaders including town and city mayors who attached significant importance to the music and dance workshops



36. Mayor of Chester with Olympic torch bearer in a procession with myself on the drums.



37. Olympic torch bearer swaps the torch with my African drum.



The cultural segment of London 2012 Olympic Games included a festival organised in Manchester called 'We Face Forward', which focused on West African music, dance, painting and the related arts. This festival could be linked to Ghana on two levels: Firstly, the fact that many slaves that were taken from West Africa were Ghanaians, an issue that was discussed at the Pan-African Congress in Manchester in 1945 (Iddrisu, 2011). "The 1945 Pan African congress in Manchester, England was the springboard for decolonization. The congress culminated into the adoption of a resolution that called for the colonial authorities to reform the colonies socially and economically" (2011, 111). Secondly, the title of the festival was taken from a speech of Kwame Nkrumah the first President of postcolonial Ghana. When Ghana became a republic in 1960, Nkrumah said, "We face neither East nor West: we face forward" (Nkrumah, 1960, 4). The Ghanaian leader spoke these words in resistance to the Cold-War struggle between the superpowers.

The festival included an art exhibition which took its direction from Nkrumah's statement of independence and celebrated the dynamism and creativity of West African artists today. 'We Face Forward' also highlighted pressing global concerns, present in the work of these artists: matters of economic and cultural exchange, environment and sustainability and the place of tradition in contemporary culture. As part of this festival, I did a one week residency programme at the University of Manchester's Whitworth Gallery where students and visitors participated in both drumming and dancing activities. The dance performance segments extended to other parts of the city including the Manchester Gallery. At outdoor events including football matches African drums were employed as unifying elements that pull people together. Limes Times events magazine of Manchester reports "African drummers were causing a stir at the recent

Street 2 feet tournament. The music brought people together; putting a smile on everyone's face and gave the day that fantastic feel" (LimesTimes, 2012, 1).

#### **8.18. Relevance of African Music and Dance to Britain and the Western World**

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, there has been a significant increase in empirical knowledge about dance and its related art forms in education and development. However, the place of dance in contemporary Britain has been a subject of debate over the years. Scholars including Graham Mc Fee (2004), Patricia Sanderson (1996) and Peter Brinson (1991) have added their views. Mc Fee discusses the location of dance within Physical Education in British school curriculum, touching on demands for justification of the rationale for its inclusion. Sanderson on the other hand observed that although teachers often express their perplexity as to why dance is a part of Physical Education the relationship between the two disciplines is worth exploring. She argues that "while dance shares the same conceptual basis with other arts, it also has many links with sporting activities" (Sanderson 1996, 54). For Brinson, the predominance of Physical Education over dance was a 20<sup>th</sup> century idea which emerged from the desire to improve the fitness of the nation prior to the First World War. This idea has been sustained and under the 1988 Education Act dance continues to be offered as part of Physical education. Gleanings from the aforementioned perspectives suggest that although dance has long been part of Physical Education in the context of the National Curriculum, justification for its inclusion in the curriculum appears to be the current focus. Significantly, African Dance has done more than justification of its inclusion as has been articulated in the previous sections. The point is that keeping dance under Physical Education will continue to suppress it to the gradual loss of its

relevance in British society. There is enough ground to argue that by placing dance under Physical Education may restrict the art form to a physical exercise with its artistic dimensions concealed, resulting to the potential loss of its dignity. What is important here is that African dances especially Ghanaian forms extend beyond sporting activity and function not only as expressive arts but also as documented history, knowledge and values of the people.

Having enumerated the enormous contribution made by African music and dance to Britain both in theory and practice, it is important to state clearly here that the educational curriculum in Britain is not complete without this art form. Of course, African Dance, when looked at whether as a movement system, a complex cultural phenomenon or a documented history of people, has much to say about the different people of African and Caribbean backgrounds living in Britain today. Some of these Black people were forcefully removed from their indigenous knowledge in the advent of foreign cultures including Arabo-Islamic and Euro-Christian traditions. Providentially, the new breeze of multiculturalism unquestionably calls for the inclusion of these minority arts in the school curriculum in Britain; and elsewhere in the Western world, in order to facilitate holistic education and also to ensure community cohesion and peaceful co-existence.

#### **8.19. Recommendations for Public Policy**

As far back in 1976, Naseem Khan felt the need to call on British authorities to support the ethnic minority arts and this significantly led to the reemergence of African Dance in the country. Having articulated the important role African dance plays in the lives of Black people as

well as the knowledge and values embedded in it, this chapter recommends two ways through which this significant knowledge can be harmonised and used in Britain and elsewhere in the Western world.

Perhaps the ideal thing may be a reintroduction of African music and dance in the British educational curriculum from primary school through to university level. This will help to reconstruct knowledge embodied in the various dances for dissemination in order to demonstrate that critical studies of these dance forms can lead to an in-depth understanding of African indigenous knowledge and cultural values. Furthermore, it would be helpful if the Arts Council and the British Government reconsider their funding policies for such minority groups in order to create the opportunity for the emergence of African dance companies in the country. Through constant funding, these groups will engage in cultural education in the various communities and this will help to discover new ways through which Black and African indigenous knowledge bodies and values can be harmonised with modern culture and utilised for the development of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain.

## **8.20. Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have identified and discussed the legacy of Adzido. I have also discussed the impact of this legacy on multicultural British society through current African dance practitioners as well as my own practice. A brief political history and ideologies of British successive governments have also been discussed in relation to funding and appreciating African Dance in particular and ethnic minority arts in general.

In summary, it can be seen that the Black/African dance, having gone through stages of neglect and tolerance, has eventually reached a stage of celebration where it is given a chance in the British school curriculum, in local communities and faith-based organisations. One of the greatest achievements has been the dedication of October to the celebration of Black peoples' achievements. Black History Month has now enabled groups like Venavi Drums, Agudze Dance Ensemble and Abladei UK to celebrate Black culture in Britain and this has significantly contributed to multicultural integration in Britain. In spite of this observation, one fact remains unchanged. Government acts that were enacted right from the 1970s to the present to encourage and harness the ethnic minority arts in order to create a multicultural society appear to be dormant. It would be naive to believe that all is well for the Black arts and the artist when all signs show that very soon there will be no jobs for people like myself, simply because the schools may not have money to hire any artist to deliver Black and African dance workshops.

## **Chapter 9: Findings and the Issue of Representation**

### **9.1. Introduction**

In this study I have presented and developed my central argument stressing the core point that Anlo-Ewe dance is a repository for knowledge and also a vehicle for transmission of Anlo-Ewe cultural values both in Ghana and in Britain. One of the aims of this work was to produce an ethnography of Anlo-Ewe dance from an emic perspective, showing how the people conceptualise their dance world. The thesis, therefore, offers a way of entry into this world to those outside the Anlo-Ewe tradition. Having articulated in previous chapters, the significant knowledge embedded in Anlo-Ewe dance and suggested ways in which it can be harnessed and used in contemporary society, the issue of representation has been identified as an important area of 21st century scholarship. This chapter discusses the influence of existing perspectives on representing 'African arts' in relation to the significance of my findings, with my interest located in the context of building African theoretical frameworks within which scholars may operate in making statements about dance in Africa and the related art forms. The chapter brings together a summary of my findings, suggests ways for improvement and speculates on future research directions. Also in this final chapter, I offer a new perspective of how best African dance forms and related arts could be analysed and represented.

### **9.2. Existing and Emerging Perspectives**

In this thesis I have articulated the role and significance of Anlo-Ewe dance in both the indigenous and international settings. My findings suggest that in the Anlo-Ewe local setting, dance is considered as a significant part of everyday life, and as such, it is seen as the culture of the people. This culture, when taken from the native setting to national urban stage, becomes a representation of the people. I have also established the point that Anlo-Ewe dance in Britain and

the diaspora does not only provide a cultural reunion to the Anlo-Ewe and Ghanaian immigrants, but also it serves as an art form in cross-cultural education for the benefit of all other groups contributing to a diverse and multicultural society in Britain. Acknowledging and appreciating Anlo-Ewe dance and its roles in order to increase its visibility depends on how effectively this art form is represented. I will now employ some existing views to create a scholarly platform on which to reopen the debate on the issue of representation in order to convey my suggestions. Looking at representation through dance, Shay (2002) uses cultural studies and social sciences including sociology and anthropology to create an approach that cuts across the many disciplines involved to interrogate state-sponsored folk dance. His work examines the repertoires, performances and choreographic strategies, artistic directors and choreographers of these companies within the political, social, gendered and national contexts in which each company was created. In addition to music and movement, Shay captures costumes, props and other theatrical elements and discusses how various companies employed them in designing their choreography in order to represent the national identity their states wanted to promote. Shay's work defines representation as the power of describing others.

The work of Ghanaian music scholar Kofi Agawu (2003) provides a critical perspective on the discourse of representing Africa, examines ethical considerations, assumptions, and prejudices that influence the presentation of ethnographic data, and theorises about the definition of African music. His earlier work (1995) provides a detailed discussion of the integration of African rhythms with life, the characteristics of northern Ewe music and dance, their cultural functions, and the relationship between language and rhythm. Agawu here offers a useful example of an integrated approach to theorising on African music and dance, although he focuses on rhythmic

aspects. Agawu's theory of representation and that of other scholars I have mentioned in this thesis including Stuart Hall (1997) provide insight into factors that must be considered if one wants to achieve effective representation. Hall argues that "in every culture, there is always a great diversity of meanings about any topic and more than one way of interpreting or representing it" (Hall 1997, 2). This argument resonates with my findings, specifically, in the area of how Anlo-Ewe movements and gestures produce meanings according to how they are executed. The point of reference here is the understanding of the idea that, although different African groups may perform dances with similar movements, the meaning of these movements may differ largely according to how they are interpreted in the various cultures. In other words, dances in Africa differ as a result of cultural tradition. With this orientation, I will now reopen the debate on representation for further discussion.

### **9.3. Reopening the Debate**

In reopening the debate on the issue of representation, I would like to look at the term with my cross-cultural experience of practice in Ghana and in Britain, in order to put it in perspective with a special reference to the current controversy surrounding how Africa is being represented by Western scholars. Scholars including Agawu (2003), Green (1998, 2011) and Murungi (2004) are of the view that effective representation of Africa must be done solely by the Africans. Green for example, articulates this point further with the following remarks:

It never ceases to amaze me that outsiders have the audacity to waltz into African Studies, dictate the terms, and establish themselves as authoritative leaders....To establish archives of written African music and dance, Africans, themselves, must bear the lion share of this undertaking, as they are the task force to capture this music from the villages (Green 2011, 29-30).



I would argue that the task of representing the arts of Africa is not limited to only Africans, especially when these arts are constantly in dialogue with Western and other arts in a globalised world. Therefore, Africanism in this context is not limited to only Africans who are devoted enough to promote and protect traditional and cultural values of their continent. There are also non-Africans who in their research journey may acquire a certain level of specialisation in some aspects of African arts. For example, John Miller Chernoff (1979), David Locke (1982), Steven Friedson (2009) and James Burns (2009) are non-Africans who spent a significant amount of time in Anlo-Eweland and documented passionately the significance of Anlo-Ewe music and dance. I argue here that these scholars are also qualified to be called scholars of African arts or Africanists. This is because they have spent much time engaging and interrogating the intrinsic elements of African material thereby attaining some level of specialisation in it. While the term arguably usually refers to anthropologists, archaeologists, ethnomusicologists and other social scientists who work on African material, there is some sort of distinctiveness in terms of cultural identity. For example, my African background stemmed from birth through training to practice with full immersion into the cultural values of Anlo-Ewe people in Ghana. Perhaps what differentiates my practice from that of other African scholars is the privilege of being trained in African indigenous knowledge and the experiences gathered in Europe as a practitioner. While this advantage allows me some level of understanding to integrate African knowledge and Western knowledge in the practice of Anlo-Ewe dance, I acknowledge here that there is still so much to learn, not only from the African traditional authorities but also from other knowledge authorities outside my native arena.

Representation, as conceptualised by Hall (1997), may be viewed as the act of description, portrayal or imagining of an image, scenario or place. It could be referred to as an act of placing something to stand for or as an embodiment of a certain thing. Based on this proposition, representation may be considered as "any image, be it in films, art or the media, used as an equivalent or a substitute for something else" (Hall 1997, 4). Hence, the act of dancing or dance making can be regarded as a significant form of representation. Dance critic John Martin (1989 [1939]) provides an understanding of how dance employs as its medium a material that is closer to life experience, arguing that both the dancer and the spectator must consider psychological factors that make movement a means of perception to enable effective communication. He states, "For not only does the dancer employ movement to express his ideas, but, strange as it may seem, the spectator must also employ movement in order to respond to the dancer's intention and understand what he is trying to convey" (Martin 1989, 1). Martin is of the view that for a dance to be understood as an expressive art in terms of the message it carries, insight into the meaning and significance of its movement is crucial for both those who do it and those who watch it.

Adair (2007) examines representation through a comprehensive discussion of Phoenix Dance Company in Britain. The participatory and observatory approach in her qualitative research captures a catalogue of challenges the founding members encountered as a black and minority all-male small dance group, trying to use dance to express their thoughts and feelings. This ranges from discrimination through racial abuse to denial of access to funding opportunities. Clearly, her research creates the opportunity for clearer understanding of current representational issues surrounding African Dance and ethnic minority arts in general. The methodology used in her research (which involved direct interviews with the company members as well as drawing on

documents from the company's archive) underscores the importance of such primary sources in representing a phenomenon. In view of the foregoing, I find Adair's approach useful in the academic study of dance in Africa as it may provide the technique of using oral tradition in developing scholarly work, particularly, in Anlo-Eweland where issues of representation cannot be fully resolved without considering oral tradition and its power in indigenous knowledge preservation.

Hall asserts, "Representation is a process of secondary importance which enters into the field only after things have been fully formed and their meaning constituted. But since the 'cultural turn' in the human and social sciences, meaning is thought to be produced-constructed-rather than simply 'found'" (Hall 1997, 5). Representation as a tool has been used to analyse and portray layers and complexities of meaning perhaps with the intention of allowing the viewer to look deeper than the surface, obtain a fuller understanding and unpack all the elements of the story and its connotations. However, sometimes this tool is used by choreographers, dancers, writers and visual artists to simplify meanings in order to spread ideas or agendas as efficiently as possible amongst audiences.

This research has informed my thinking that the issue of representation can only be fully dealt with by exploring every aspect of the engagement between scholars and what is being represented. What I have discovered in the last eight years of my practice is the fact that tension occasionally arises between African indigenous scholars and their Western counterparts as to who is more qualified to represent the arts of Africa. Like Agawu and Green, the Ghanaian artists with whom I have worked as part of this research including George Dzikunu, Atsu

Awoonor and Nii Yartey have often questioned the legitimacy of Westerners in teaching Ghanaian music and dance. It would be a display of naivety and ignorance on my part if I did not comment on this observation as this tension may be seen as a clear indication of two racial forces of antagonism working against each other. The question is, how do we as practitioners, scholars and teachers of dance and the related arts resolve this tension without necessarily aligning ourselves to race? How do we tackle it without necessarily assuming that sense of belonging and ownership? Can we only talk about our own backgrounds and heritage? Providing answers to these questions requires a better understanding of the complexities of race and racism. Perhaps a deeper understanding and appreciation of the complex relationship between dance and politics might help us in this endeavour. Dance scholar Randy Martin (1998) examined the theory of social movements as an avenue of insight into a critical understanding of the relationship between dance and politics. He stated, "The collision and mutual displacement of forces - their motional flows – is what makes for difference, and difference can be summed up, organised, and contextualised in myriad ways that produce a given society and structure its divisions along lines of class, gender, sexuality, race and much more" (Martin 1998, 3). Martin's statement validates my argument that effective representation cannot be achieved by aligning ourselves to race. While race in this context refers to ethnicity, acknowledging and respecting the diversity of cultures in the world today becomes a desirable quality that is as important as our own identities.

This thesis is not about race and therefore I did not find it necessary to discuss it in the previous chapters. However, there are moments when talking about who has the right to represent whom and in what context inevitably leads to a situation where race becomes unavoidable; hence I am bringing it late in the thesis. Significantly, Adair's work (2007) sufficiently helps situate Anlo-

Ewe dance in Britain regarding the problems it faces including lack of funding and marginalisation since these problems are not different from what Phoenix faced in their early days. In as much as it has an impact on representation, it is very important to look at the roots of racism and this could be attributed to a number of factors under the Trans-Atlantic slavery that witnessed the transportation of able bodies from Africa to the Americas and Europe for over three hundred years. Cultural theorist Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban in her book, Race and Racism (2006) examines the foundations of race in American society. She offers a simple and accessible explanation of the biology of race and a cross-cultural perspective on the social context of race, colour-coding, ethnicity and ethnocentrism. In a world where race is a factor in almost every society and its politics, her research finds abundant evidence that race is a dynamic, changing concept; and that it is a cultural concept rather than a biological 'fact'. Although her work focuses on race and racism in American society, factors that account for racism such as slavery and colonisation, as she articulated, are equally applicable to Britain. Therefore, one can argue that there exists the presence of race and racism in Britain, otherwise, there would be no need for the enactment of racial and equality laws in Britain some of which I referred to in Chapter 8. Fuehr-Lobban reminds us that "although race as a concept developed in the West during the Enlightenment, it was spread to many parts of the non-Western world through international commerce, including slave trade and, later colonial conquest and administration-which have used it as effective tool of social division" (Fuehr-Lobban 2006, 4).

While it is very important for all people to mobilise forces globally in a collective fight against any form of racism, it is equally very important to be aware that any individual or a group of individuals that attempts to fight a monster called racism with the sole purpose of claiming

superiority over the other race is potentially racist. Martin Luther King Jr. made a valid point when he said: 'A doctrine of black supremacy is as evil as a doctrine of white supremacy' (Scott King 1987, 19).

As an African, born and raised in Ghana, my training and practice in traditional African dance forms over three decades both locally and internationally privileges me to suggest a slightly new perspective that might help us in representing dance and the related arts of Africa. My background as a practitioner in both Africa and Europe all these years has given me the opportunity to experience the art form both on its native soil and on the proscenium stage, an experience capable of moving one's perception from convergent thoughts to divergent thinking. With this wealth of experience, I argue that a more effective representation of African dance cultures requires a better understanding of dance in an African context.

#### **9.4. Understanding Dance in an African Context.**

Given that the African continent presently consists of fifty-seven different nations, each with diverse ethnic groups and their various unique cultural practices such as music, dance, language, storytelling, moonlight games, food, occupations, fashion design, names and philosophical sayings, revealing the holistic nature of African arts as a shared tradition of the people, and as such, can never be represented effectively by a single individual. Over twenty years ago, Grau wrote about the importance of giving consideration to the different cultures in Africa when talking about African dances. She noted, "One must remember that Africa consists of over 50 countries, so when people talk of 'African dance' as if it were a single entity, they are denying

African peoples the panorama of creativity and individuality" (Grau 1993, 43). Furthermore, to engage in the representational elements of dances in Africa, one must spend a considerable amount of time to learn and understand each of the systems/genres as well as the purpose it serves in its community. To understand the functions of dance in Africa is synonymous to the understanding of African philosophy of life. Yartey (2009) provides some characteristics of African Dance which are related to the lives of the people. He writes,

In Africa, dance serves as an index to the value systems that enable the community to interpret and express the various events of life. Participation in dance and other forms of artistic expression is a community experience. Dance provides the necessary linkages based on kinship, religion and common language that ensure meaningful social relationships, mutual respect and sense of belonging among members of the various communities. Its creation and practice are viewed as a collective responsibility and integral to life (Yartey 2009, 254).

Yartey's views make it clear that dance in African societies is considered as documentation of life experiences and also a communal activity that brings the whole community together. Although Yartey's opinion might not perfectly fit in that continental characterisation, there are some elements which many African dances share. For example, the polycentric nature of the African dancing body allows movements to be concentrated in a portion of the body, be it the torso, hips, legs, arms, hands, feet and even the toes. Secondly, these separate regions of the body are recognised and utilised either individually or simultaneously depending on the dance type, rather than moving as one limited unit. Above all, dance in Africa does not exist without its music. This is usually characterised by drumming, singing and the accompaniment of other percussive instruments such as bells, shakers, clappers, whistles and others. Considering the above elements, here is the big question. How can this holistic art form be effectively represented through the various media available to us in today's world of technological advancement without a first-hand look at its practical component?

Although Stuart Hall and other Western cultural theorists have developed a strong theoretical foundation regarding cultural representation, Western conventions alone cannot be used to fully represent the arts of Africa. This is not to say that these conventions are totally irrelevant in African dance scholarship. I propose here a holistic approach involving integration of vocal and instrumental sounds with body movements and gestures, visual imagery and the various traditional African sensory modalities in the arts making process to locate dance and its related art forms in a socio-cultural framework adaptable to scholars, practitioners and teachers as observed by Amegago (2011). For this approach to be complete, it must touch both the conceptual and practical elements of the art form in a collaborative process involving both native African scholars and their Western counterparts who are able to spend a considerable amount of time to experience the art form in its native soil. In other words, the idea I am proposing here introduces a new dimension of ethnography where fieldwork will still be employed as the main investigative tool but in a new fashion that combines the experience of native and foreign scholars. Ethnochoreologist Anca Giurchescu (1999) considers fieldwork as "an important method of research, which is based upon artificially created situations in order to study phenomena and processes" (Giurchescu 1999, 50). Similarly, Grau (1999) who sees fieldwork as enmeshed with relations of power argues that "to realise an adequate and truthful ethnographic account, the admittance of the truth of 'unreality' is essential; only through an implicit internationalised knowledge of local cultural standards can meaningful units of analysis be extracted" (Grau 1999, 172). Grau's argument does not only endorse Giurchescu's view on fieldwork as an important ethnographic tool, but also it lays bare the complexities involved as regards politics and power. Therefore, the combination of African native scholars and their



Western counterparts with a common purpose as being proposed in my discussion may be considered as an essential therapy for these complexities.

Buckland (2006) discusses the history and ethnographic dimensions of dance research and makes a distinction between the dance ethnographer and the dance historian. According to Buckland, the dance ethnographer "investigates the customary dance practices of an aggregate of people such as an ethnic or cultural group. The dance historian more frequently focuses on individuals or perhaps a dance company often seeking evidence of innovative rather than consensual activity" (2006, 3). While this distinction provides a clear sense of what each of the two dance researchers do in the field, Buckland articulates the need to explore overlaps and interrelations between history and ethnography in 21<sup>st</sup> century dance research.

Like Buckland, Grau and Girchescu, I fully recognise that dance research in the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires a combination of both synchronic and diachronic perspectives. In the study of Anlo-Ewe dance and many other African dances, both ethnography and history must inform their theoretical and methodological frameworks which must unquestionably assume an interdisciplinary mode. For example, Buckland notes, "Both ethnography and history may be found interrelated in studies of dance that, for their theoretical and methodological frameworks are located in anthropology, ethnology, ethnomusicology and folklore studies" (2006, 4).

### **9.5. National Dance Companies**

The formation of national dance companies as a post-independence construction of national identity could be counted as one of the socio-political ways of cultural representation. Although there may be minor criticisms from traditional authorities that using the Western model of theatricalising dances undermines traditional practice as we have seen in the case of the Ghana Dance Ensemble in Chapter 6, the benefit outweighed what the cultural norms consider as the damage.

The Ghanaian example paved the way for other African countries whose post-independence progress began to follow the trend by forming such national dance companies to represent their national identity on the international stage. 'Heart Beat of Africa' a national dance company of Uganda was at an international dance festival held in Moscow in 1967 dubbed 'Expo '67'. Anthropologists Judith Lynne Hanna and William John Hanna (1968) who described the emergence of such groups as a renaissance of African culture wrote,

The appearance of Uganda's 'Heart beat of Africa' a national troupe of dancers and musicians at Expo '67 attracted international attention to this East African country's attempt to preserve valued elements of ethnic cultures, enhance its national pride and future and project its image from the outside world (Hanna and Hanna 1968, 42).

There were many other post-independence national dance companies that followed the Ghanaian example. These include Guinea Ballet, National Ballet of Senegal, National Ballet of Ivory Coast and National Dance Company of Gambia; all of which were established as a "viable vehicle for their Pan-Africanist and nationalistic ideology and their determination to reverse the negative legacy of Africa's colonial past" (Yartey, 2009, 261). Similarly, Iddrisu (2011) states,

The Ghana Dance Ensemble, Le Ballet National du Senegal, and Les Ballets Africains of Guinea were important institutions in the struggle for cultural equality, respect, and self determination. Their goal was to demystify Western prejudice and counter demeaning imagery of Africans by highlighting cultural forms like dance, music, and sculpture that had the power to explain African cultural and social norms to the world (Iddrisu 2011, 113).

While these national dance companies have a dualistic role of representing ethnic cultures on the national stage and representing a national culture on the international stage, the word 'tradition' becomes their key element but with variable dimensions. The work of dance scholar Francesca Castaldi (2006) examines the performances of the National Ballet of Senegal, both on the international stage in California and on the national stage in Dakar. Castaldi observes that national dance companies share a commitment to integrating ethnic cultural elements with other ethnic elements hence they are considered as representations of 'traditional' culture. Using the metaphor of 'a dancing circle' she discusses the significance of choreographic representations of national dance companies and argues that "because of their polyethnic representation of 'traditional' culture, however, they open up a novel space of cultural production" (Castaldi 2006, 2003). Additionally, the work of cultural theorist and dance scholar Elke Kaschl (2003) investigates the performance of nationalism through dance as a relational process between Israel and Palestine, showing how dance functions as a cultural practice that performs the difference in identity between the two nations and their interconnectedness. Drawing on other scholars including Benedict Anderson (1991) and Arjun Appadurai (1997), she constructs a relational theory which "focuses on the ways in which collective identities were never bound in the first place in the sense of being segregated, isolated or closed off, but were always constructed in relation to an Other" (Kaschl 2003, 3). Castaldi and Kaschl provide the understanding that

nation-states, whilst 'imagined' and 'constructed', are able to exhibit their identities individually or collectively in performing nationalism both conceptually and pragmatically through dance.

Post-independent African nations employed dance as a tool with which they wanted to represent their new constructed nations but these national dance ensembles were not without challenges. The political climate in Africa interfered with the progress of such renaissance groups making it very difficult, if not impossible, for them to achieve their main aims including, representing the identity of their various countries and facilitating positive representation of the African continent. In the case of Uganda, Idi Amin's regime (1971 – 1979) negatively affected the arts in general leading to the eventual collapse of Heart Beat of Africa as most of the artists either went into exile or abandoned their craft for fear of losing their lives. In Ghana, although the arts had suffered at the hands of politicians who consistently refused to fund cultural programmes over the years leading to public agitation, a national cultural policy was drafted and launched in 2004 to take care of the arts and the entire culture. In its preamble, the Cultural Policy of Ghana dedicates its mission to the realisation of the vision of Ghana to harness its cultural heritage in developing the nation.

It is dedicated to the realisation of the vision of the people of Ghana to respect, preserve, harness and use their cultural heritage and resources to develop a united, vibrant and prosperous national community with a distinctive African identity and personality and collective confidence and pride of place among the comity of Nations (NCC 2004, 1).

What is interesting in the vision of the Cultural Policy of Ghana is the desire to develop African identity and personality. Twentieth century ideologies of African identity (often considered as generalisation) still dominate the document and this has the potential of continental-focused representation to the detriment of local cultural forms within the nation. Once the document is a

national one specifically designed to work in Ghana, the ideal mission must be geared towards the development of Ghanaian identity rather than a continental representation.

In developing a theoretical framework for African Dance, there is the need to engage with the Western academic conventions. This will require a proper collaboration between Western scholars and their African counterparts to provide the opportunity for both groups of scholars to experience the art form on its native soil. A few Western scholars have attempted this approach by doing ethnographic studies but could not fully succeed due to the fact that their works often focused only on the music aspect of the art form. Burns (2009); Jones (1954); Chernoff (1979); Koetting (1970) and Locke (1982) are good examples. Locke studied the music of Anlo-Ewe people in Ghana and his background as performer reflected in his approach emphasising both descriptive and analytical methods. Chernoff, a social scientist on the other hand observed the musical types of Dagombas and the Anlo-Ewe with a combination of his learning experience and the aesthetics of his acculturative experience in Ghana that emphasises his approach as more descriptive than analytical.

Burns is a Mexican -American ethnomusicologist who spent ten years in studying a small Ghanaian community in West Africa. During this period he learnt and mastered the music, dance and language of a section of the Anlo-Ewe people who live in a small town in the Volta Region of Ghana called Dzodze. His recent work "Female Voices from an Ewe Dance-drumming Community in Ghana" (2009) with a DVD documentary could be regarded as a starting point of what I call a holistic approach to the study and representation of the arts of Africa. Burns brings a clear distinction between researching through ethnographic study on one hand; and relying on mere stage productions and making one's own judgements on the other hand. Arguably, his work

could be described as the most satisfying one among the few listed above simply because he concentrated on a small group in the Anlo-Ewe community.

Burns has done ground breaking work in the field of African dance but I would consider myself a passive reader if I did not point out the conflicts and confusions that were consistently occurring in his discussion. For example, his ability to speak Anlo-Ewe deceived him to believe he could translate Anlo-Ewe philosophical sayings as though they were English expressions and in the process there were so many complexities, some of which are discussed in Chapter 4, which he simply missed. Clearly, all the above studies reveal a common problem that stems from a general lack of a holistic approach as stated in Koetting's research. He stated,

To analyse the patterns of a drum ensemble piece individually is to miss the main characteristic of the music, which is the totality of sound produced by the interrelation of the various parts. This is particularly true in viewing the relation between the master drum and the rest of the ensemble [...] what is needed is a comprehensive analysis that can encompass similarities and differences as components of the whole.... A deeper probe of the music involving such detail as the precise beginnings of master drum patterns, possible verbal meanings in subgroup or individual supporting patterns, and dance associations--would have to be made before any trustworthy conclusions could be reached (Koetting 1970, 139).

Interestingly, Koetting's point does mention dance associations but fails to include a debate on the dance component of the art form. This is one of the many challenges we face as researchers and depending on our response, it may render our data incomplete no matter how credible they are.

The main setbacks to achieving a holistic collaboration may include but are not limited to a lack of trust on the part of the custodians of the art form considering the inferiority African people suffered following the advent of slavery and colonisation. To free ourselves from this entanglement, there is the need for a paradigm shift regarding what has been mentally constructed over the years. To make my argument clearer, it is necessary to look at the word paradigm in the proper context. It is very easy to misuse, abuse, misunderstand or even hate the word paradigm if much care is not taken.

I consider paradigm as a way of thinking, perceiving, communicating and viewing the world; therefore, it can be called a world view or a mind-set. It may be seen as part of the human cognitive domain that the bearers are not often aware of due to the fact that it functions at a subconscious level. In the context of this chapter, paradigm includes theories, principles, values, beliefs and doctrines. Psychologically speaking, it is the rigid tacit infrastructure of ideas that shapes not only our thinking but also our perception of the world. Scientifically, it constitutes the immune system of our mind against new ideas which might be dangerous. However if it prevents the take up of any new idea, then I am afraid it is more dangerous.

My experience of practising dance in both Africa and Europe including fieldwork conducted for this thesis has given me some orientation to be aware that, Africans at home and in the diaspora can be misled by paradigms to assume some sort of supreme power regarding representing the arts of Africa. Interestingly, some of these 'powerful Africans' have not been in touch with the art form and cannot identify its key elements. It is also possible to find several African indigenous scholars who are totally missing on the 'stage' due to the fact that they lack the practical training in the art form. Also, it is likely to find African practitioner/scholars whose

argument may focus on representing African cultures solely from the emic perspective. Just as I came to Britain with the belief that Anlo-Ewe dances must be performed to reflect the exact traditions of Anlo-Ewe culture, it is possible to think that Adzido may have held and promoted the same view in their performances. Dartey Kumodzie remarked in an interview I conducted with him during my fieldwork in Ghana:

There is a very limited number of African music and dance practitioners who double as scholars, and these are the right paint brushes that can put Africa on the global canvas. Therefore, we have a collective responsibility of creating an enabling/ conducive environment well motivating to keep such people in society for the purpose of transferring their skills into the younger generations (Dartey Kumodzie, 2011).

A perfect example of such combined scholar-practitioner is Modesto Amegago, a Ghanaian music and dance scholar who uses an integrated approach in his teaching practices of African music and dance in North America. In an article titled 'Integrated Approach to Teaching African Dance and Music: Challenges and Prospects', Amegago (2007) discusses his experiences of using this approach focusing on the method of designing dance courses, the strategies of teaching, learning, assessing and evaluating these courses and the challenges posed to this approach as a response to the needs and demands of some educational institutions. Justifying this approach, he writes, "Such an approach is geared towards reintegrating the various aspects of African Performing Arts which are now modelled under separate areas such as music, dance, drama and visual arts in most contemporary arts educational institutions" (Amegago 2007, 87). The Ghanaian dance academic in a telephone interview referred to representation as a multidimensional process and pointed to the holistic technique as the appropriate approach to represent African arts (Amegago, 2011).



The core point from the already established Western conventions here is centred on **concept** and **meaning** as the significant elements of representation which need, in this case, to be communicated artistically through dance. However, these elements are naturally the embodiment of the culture of a given people/society. As an African traditional dance practitioner, I would look at culture in this context as the accumulated practices and experiences of a people in a given geophysical environment through time and causation. In other words, culture is the totality of the knowledge system of a people relating to every aspect of life. It is however, dynamic and in constant flux. The Cultural Policy of Ghana defines it below:

Culture is the totality of the way of life evolved by our people through experience and reflection in our attempt to fashion a harmonious co-existence with our environment. Culture is dynamic and gives order and meaning to the social, political, economic aesthetic and religious practices of our people. Our culture gives us identity as people (NCC 2004, 3).

The dynamism of an African culture as articulated above, is guided by its underlying bedrock of metaphysical elements such as insight into principles and mechanisms of social life, cosmogony, music, movement, language, philosophy, religion, customs and beliefs, symbolism and visual arts, all of which constitute a holistic art form known as dance, and was originally stored in a repository called oral tradition. For instance, Ghanaian ethnic groups have a number of positive values including good moral living and respect for the elderly, all of which are stored in their songs, dance movements and drum languages simply to serve as guiding principles which also provide room for innovation in future developments.

In my attempt to look at representation as a surrogate, I invite questions such as; what is a surrogate for? How close is the surrogate to the 'original' thing? What attributes of the original

does it capture? What attributes of the original does it omit and so on? In representing African arts, one would have to seek answers to the above questions and the most satisfying method is to experience the practical element of it in its native soil. Shay (2002) notes: "An artistic director or choreographer can learn dances by using a number of methods. By far the most satisfying is field work in which the individual goes to the place where the dance is natively performed" (2002, 43). This, in Africa will lead to the development of a deeper sense of understanding and appreciation of the art form as a spontaneous emanation of the people. Therefore, one of the best ways of representing Africa is to look at both ontological and epistemological approaches to its holistic art form. This herculean task must be carried out collectively.

On Friday, 17<sup>th</sup> September, 2010, a conference was organised at the University of Roehampton in London for staff and postgraduate students on 'The Idea of University'. A hundred and twenty years after his death, John Henry Newman's concept of university still remains a fresh challenge for the twenty-first century scholars. In fulfillment of Newman's (1854) notion of enlarging the mind to experience other disciplines in order to acquire knowledge and skills in other areas apart from one's own field of specialisation, I decided to hold an African drumming and dance session for the participants at the conference. (This was not pre-planned.) In her conference report, theologian Tina Beattie wrote: "A real highlight of the day was when Kwashie conducted an impromptu drumming session during the lunch break, and the drums talked among themselves with their own particular blend of eloquence, humour and intelligence" (Beattie 2010). While it is important to note here that Beattie reported the true picture of the session, it is equally important to state here that in Africa, the word 'impromptu' would not be needed due to the nature of the African arts.

Ballerina and anthropologist Anya Peterson Royce who uses a comparative, cross-cultural and cross-temporal approach to study issues of artistry, virtuosity and interpretation in performance makes a distinction between “knowing something by the doing of it and knowing something by thinking about it”(Royce 2004, 228). The holistic technique can only work perfectly by looking at the African arts with an interdisciplinary approach that is capable of touching its sociological, political, anthropological, musical, historical, philosophical and socio-cultural dimensions. It is a two-way affair that will see the integration of key dualistic realities such as practical and theoretical components of the art form, ontological and epistemological examination of its contents, observer-participant involvement by African native scholars and their Western counterparts, a combination of local and global perspective; and ethnography and history moving together through the employment of synchronic and diachronic approaches. In addition, representing this holistic art form in the modern globalised world of creativity and innovation must adopt flexible tools to make room for adjustments, modifications and negotiations in order to serve the multicultural needs of society.

Using dance as a tool for representation as I have done in Britain in relation to the above point, reaffirms the notion that dance representation is based on classifications which are not necessarily meant to reflect a definitive order of things but are conceived as flexible tools of understanding. Representing Anlo-Ewe dance in Britain is not only about capturing its ‘authentic’ essence but also it is a challenging process of reconstruction. While documentation of dance may involve capturing, transforming and interpreting the art form through a first hand experience of it, practitioners, teachers, scholars and critics need to be aware that dance representation cannot produce anything called ‘original’ or ‘authentic.’

Until this holistic approach is used collectively to develop a theoretical framework, African Dance can be aesthetically appealing to its audience but its concept and meaning with all other representational elements may still be missing in contemporary scholarship. Speaking from my Ghanaian point of view, our own paradigms can mislead us to believe that apart from the Africans, no other scholars are needed to engage in constructing an appropriate framework within which statements could be made about the African arts. It is impossible to view one's own self completely without using a mirror. This re-echoes the Anlo-Ewe wise saying that: "*Nunya Adzidoe, asi metune o.*" (Knowledge is like the trunk of a baobab tree that a single person's arms cannot encompass.)

American anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1983) made a valid point about the best way of looking at an art as viewing it on their own terms and thinking about our own reactions. I am of the view that by viewing African arts in its own term will lead us to study and know the people as well as their thoughts being expressed in the arts. Geertz also proposed a theory of art as a cultural system in which the response to aesthetics is both intellectual and emotional or rooted in one's feelings. "These feelings in turn are seen as rooted in culture itself manifested in the varied expressions of religion, morality, science, commerce, technology, politics, amusements, law and even in the societal organisation of everyday practical existence" (Geertz 1983, 96). I would not hesitate to consider Geertzian theory as a vital part of a foundation upon which an African theoretical framework could be built. The core point here stresses the emic approach in researching and analysing arts. As I have articulated in Chapter 1, early 20<sup>th</sup> century scholarship held the idea of seeing the world through the native people's views while 21<sup>st</sup> century scholarship emphasises that it is a two way process that must capture both emic and etic

perspectives; and that ethnographies are the results of inter-subjective dialogues between researchers and the people they work with.

It is important to be aware that Western stereotypes of African Dance continue to exist despite all the scholarly work that has been carried out and this can lead to ignorance of African vital elements such as good values, principles and mechanisms of social life all of which are embedded in dance. The term stereotype, deals with the received common idea or convention that will standardize an image or conception of a type of a person or people. Generally, stereotypes that are directed towards people are often not polite and can be considered as very derogatory. In the *Observer* newspaper edition of 11<sup>th</sup> July, 2004, dance critic Jann Parry wrote, "Adzido is a company in search of identity. After losing its way doing traditional African dances, it has turned to Black South African choreographers for a contemporary urban image. Adzido, relaunched, has still to determine where it's going and what it's for" (2004, 4). Responding appropriately to the above review, I consider the fact that Parry is a dance critic and not a dance scholar. With that in mind, it is expected that dance critics who venture into a critical review of a dance must first endeavour to acquire a certain level of knowledge and understanding or orientation into the dance form they intend to examine with their critical minds. Therefore, any critical response to the above review will undoubtedly present a few questions for Parry; and these include whether or not she has ever watched the full repertory of Adzido; her knowledge and understanding of African traditional dance; the criteria she used in assessing the company to arrive at this suggestion and finally the rationale behind her judgement. Perhaps the provision of specific answers to these questions may lead the critical reader to believe that Jann Parry's article is not a deliberate attempt to stereotype Adzido in British media. Gottschild (2012) has

commented on the error of using descriptions of choreography by critics to represent a whole company, arguing that “there is a certain way of describing these predominantly black dancers that is stereotypical, and the stereotype is carried in these descriptors” (Gottschild 2012, 237).

Adshead (1988) makes us understand that dance has identifiable components that are embedded in its movements that are performed by dancers. She states,

There are two separate but related aspects of the presentation of a dance, the observable elements or components and a person’s perception of them. The components are the main focus here although it is acknowledged that for two people to talk about features of a dance, they both need to have seen them. The ability to perceive accurately and in detail develops with practice and this can be facilitated if relevant features are pointed out (Adshead 1988, 21).

As articulated above, to apply a critical thought to a dance, one must desire to gain knowledge of elements that constitute the dance. This way, it is possible to achieve a certain level of accuracy in offering your perception. Any deviation from this may lead to total ignorance of the vital elements that constitute the art form and the result may be stereotypical. Although I am disappointed at the high level of attention given to the concept of race by twenty-first century scholarship, I can understand why scholars such as Brenda Dixon-Gottschild do not want to do away with the concept of race. Castaldi (2006) asserts, “Race receded into the background as political category connected to the African colonial past and no longer meaningful to the postcolonial African world” (Castaldi 2006, 7). Whilst race may be an obsolete concept, racism is still a very much present phenomenon however.

## **9.6. Summary and Conclusion**

Transmission of Anlo-Ewe dance in Ghana and in Britain has been a long and complex journey, navigating, meandering and negotiating through a combined ethnochoreological and anthropological terrain. I argue consistently along the route that dance forms a significant part of African life and therefore the approach to its representation must assume a holistic and interdisciplinary framework that will consider all elements that constitute what the Africans call dance. Dance in Africa uses the body as an instrument through which every conceivable emotion or event is projected in "a marriage between life and dance emphasising the inseparable nature of the two" (Primus 1998, 6). Also articulated in this thesis is the point that without experiencing the practical elements of Anlo-Ewe dance, one cannot fully understand it and its application in the culture of the people.

Although I have been directly involved in the transmission of Anlo-Ewe dance both in Ghana and in Britain, I did not interpret my data strictly through the emic perspective; neither did I rely solely on an etic perspective in analysing it. In order to do an accurate and objective representation of the phenomenon I investigated, I felt the need to use a combination of both the emic and etic perspectives. I have applied this two-way approach to the investigation and analysis of Anlo-Ewe dance in two different environments (Ghana and Britain), establishing the point that an appropriate representation of African cultures can be achieved through a collaborative effort of both the native scholars and their foreign counterparts.

The work of Castaldi (2006) on the National Ballet of Senegal is a good example of quality work that demonstrates the appropriateness of using both insider and outsider perspectives in researching African dance cultures. Drawing on African philosophers and anthropologists

including Mudimbe (1988, 1994) Castaldi brings to the field a new understanding, especially, in the study of folk dance or ethnic dance both locally and cross-culturally. She explains, "The temporal dimension of tradition in relation to ethnic dance repertory acquires a different valence from that given to tradition on the proscenium stage" (Castaldi 2006, 203).

Although the Britain focused component of this research has discussed many African dance artists and companies, much of the focus has been on myself and my work as one of the key protagonists simply because the research focuses on the transmission of Anlo-Ewe dance in Britain. This is what necessitated the adoption of auto-ethnography which eventually allowed me to keep a thread within the complicated discussion, in respect of the different components that were introduced as relating to that thread. In relation to the two components, there was the need to focus on what is the story I wanted to tell the reader. In making a decision in this regard, I considered what is really relevant and important in articulating both indigenous and cosmopolitan knowledge through Anlo-Ewe dance.

In the part on Ghana, I have articulated what constitutes dance in Anlo-Ewe community as opposed to what is termed as dance in non-African societies. Under this, I have discussed the holistic nature of dance and how it becomes a significant part of life in the local communities as well as its use as a representation of Anlo-Ewe culture at a national level. I have used dance to tell the political, economic and socio-cultural history of Ghana, focusing on state institutions including the Arts Council of Ghana, the National Commission on Culture, the Ghana Dance Ensemble and the University of Ghana.



This study reveals that Anlo-Ewe indigenous knowledge, skills and cultural values are embedded in dance. Although I reiterate the various important roles of dance and its practice in Anlo-Ewe society, there is the need for further research in this area. Anlo-Ewe indigenous knowledge and values need to be rigorously researched, analysed and properly documented and digitised along the lines of the ethnochoreological and anthropological perspectives using multidisciplinary approach attempted by modern studies including, Amegago (2011), Burns (2009) Castaldi (2006) and Gbolonyo (2009). Anlo-Ewe dance when digitised will benefit the art form and its performance in three areas namely, the way it is produced in terms of its reconstruction and packaging, the way it is distributed and presented to its audiences and the way it operates within the current highly sophisticated network of contemporary arts.

The study also highlights the need to re-establish in the Anlo-Ewe and many other African groups the sense of self-esteem with confidence to understand and appreciate the importance of their indigenous cultural practices. Although the study demonstrates that there is much knowledge in dance and other cultural forms of the Anlo-Ewe and other African societies, it is only when these knowledge and values are explored and used together with modern science and technology that Africa can see development. Gbolonyo's work on the Ewe people declares,

By drawing on our very indigenous knowledge bodies and using them together with what the modern world has to offer, we will be in a position to realise the full benefits of concepts couched in many currently fashionable phrases such as 'sustainable development,' 'conflict resolution,' 'good governance,' 'poverty alleviation,' and 'environmental stewardship'; all of which could be translated as fostering a sense of peace with our cultural identity and ourselves (Gbolonyo 2009, 490).

Responding to Gbolonyo's declaration, I use the Anlo-Ewe example to articulate the importance of African indigenous knowledge and how this knowledge can be adapted and used together with modern scientific knowledge in building a multicultural society in Britain and the Diaspora. One of the challenges facing Anlo-Ewe dances and other African dance forms, as has been established in this thesis, is the lack of well-designed frameworks to serve as time tested tools for their analysis. The current Eurocentric framework we often use in the analysis of African dance cultures appears to be inadequate and as such may not be able to increase the visibility of African dance forms and their significance in Britain and the diaspora.

In her work on West African dances Gore (2001) remarks, "I am beginning to wonder if the preoccupation to search out and focus the dancing or to bemoan its textual absence is not conditioned by the deeply ingrained Eurocentric habit of conceiving of art as a compartmentalised and specialised practice, and by the increasing globalisation of all performance, irrespective of its local contexts of production" (Gore 2001, 33). The fact that a Eurocentric perception may reduce the 'art' status of African dance forms is a clear signal affirming that a Eurocentric framework is not compatible with African thought system. Kaschl's study in the Middle East endorses this point. She states,

Applying a concept developed within the historic trajectory of Western dance scholarship to a Middle East context is not unproblematic. Much conventional dance scholarship has been reproached for blanketly applying Western categories to non-Western contexts and thus developing ethnocentric system of classification (Kaschl 2003, 16).

Kaschl's point on ethnocentric system of classification was articulated earlier in the work of anthropologist and dance scholar Joann Kealiinohomoku (2001) who demonstrated clearly that such a system of classification adopted an evolutionary paradigm which placed 'folk,' 'ethnic,'

or 'primitive' dance at the bottom end of the dance performance ladder whose top level has been occupied by Western theatrical dance, particularly, ballet which became the "one great divinely ordained apogee of the performing arts" (Kealiinohomoku 2001, 35). Furthermore, Castaldi (2006) states that "Conceptualisation of dance and words as mutually exclusive domains represents a Eurocentric perspective that does not resonate with West African conceptualisations" (Castaldi 2006, 203). However, the current state of affairs does not prevent Africans from sharing Eurocentric views simply because, through colonisation African nations including Ghana have adopted and continue to allow Eurocentric ideologies of English, French, German and Portuguese descent to dominate their education and training. This could be counted as one major challenge for African nations and their dance companies to represent their true identities as we have seen in the case of Ballet Nègres and Adzido.

In my own case, I did not present Anlo-Ewe forms in Britain as ethnic dances, neither did I present them in a form of contemporary theatrical performances. So, can I say boldly that I have represented the Anlo-Ewe culture effectively in Britain? The answer is yes and no. What I have done as reported in this thesis has been the use of Anlo-Ewe dance to disseminate both African knowledge and Western knowledge which falls perfectly within cross-cultural education. Although this has its own challenges of re-creation and consideration of what is appropriate in relation to curriculum requirement, it is relatively more realistic than transforming ethnic dance into a theatrical performance in Britain. Capturing some elements of Anlo-Ewe culture in my re-creation as we have seen may be accepted in one sense as a representation of Anlo-Ewe culture in Britain. In another sense, it may not hold the same position due to the fact that representation

is a multi-dimensional phenomenon whose requirement one person or one dance company cannot fulfil as I have articulated in the name and significance of *Adzido* (the baobab tree).

It is easy to come to a theoretical conclusion that adopting both emic and etic perspectives in analysing a phenomenon may produce an accurate representation. But in pragmatic terms, the complexities involved in this approach due to the evolving nature of the 21<sup>st</sup> century world with the dynamisms of its diverse cultures, present some challenges that researchers must consider. Guerts (2002) identifies a predicament that anthropologists and ethnographers working on Anlo-Ewe material must be aware of. She states,

For decades now, anthropology as a scholarly discipline and ethnography as a professional practice has been under fire (from both within and without) for its history of collusion with imperialistic, colonialist, and capitalist cultures of the West. In this climate, the act of 'doing fieldwork' is politically charged, even in the most benign settings, and the production of a text representing the Other is fraught with multiple layers of complexity and harbours the potential to generate genuine offence (Guerts 2002, 244).

The adoption of the holistic approach of doing fieldwork in two different environments, in order to analyse my data within a combination of two perceptual schemes, was one of the strategies I devised to prevent the above problem. Because I cannot claim to be the embodiment of Anlo-Ewe indigenous cultural knowledge and Western academically anthropo-choreological knowledge, I have not been able to escape all the trappings of this quagmire, and this has been the greatest challenge of this research. Kealiinohomoku (2001) has made an important observation from her Western anthropological perspective regarding some of these complexities. She writes,

Let it be noted, once and for all, that within the various 'ethnologic' dance worlds there are also patrons, dancing masters, choreographers and performers with names woven into a very real historical fabric. The bias which those dancers have towards their own dance and artists is just as strong as ours. The difference is that

they usually don't pretend to be scholars of other dance forms, nor even very much interested in them (Kealiinohomoku 2001, 35).

The above observation resonates with my research in two ways. First, it validates my argument that tension occasionally exists between African native scholars and their Western counterparts about who is more qualified to represent African Dance. Secondly, it suggests that the bias people have towards their own dances may restrict them to the use of only the emic perspective in representing their cultural forms on stage as we have seen in the case of Adzido. This observation, therefore, endorses my holistic approach as an appropriate remedy for such tensions in dance scholarship.

Having identified such factors that challenge effective representation of African dance cultures including, the use of inappropriate framework in their analysis by Africans and non-Africans, the neglect of African dances by their owners as a result of slavery and colonialism, the marginalisation the practitioners of African dances face even in their own home soil; and lack of well-developed African frameworks, this research also speaks to the evolving Africa about the need to lift up the various African creative abilities in response to the current commodification of dance. In conclusion, I consider the perspective offered below by Appiah (1992):

But in the actual world, there has been an exogenous intervention, and it has left people with Western philosophical training in Africa. Because they are Africans rooted to at least some degree in their traditional cultures and, at the same time, intellectuals trained in the traditions of the West, they face a special situation. They may choose to borrow the tools of Western philosophy for their work. But if they wish to pursue such conceptual enquiries in the thought worlds of their own traditions, they are bound to do so with a highly developed awareness of the challenges of Western ideas (Appiah 1992, 87).

The special situation we face today as Africans is not only to analyse our indigenous arts with a foreign technique, but also the task of creating our own frameworks for compatibility. In view of this, I argue that considering the multi-dimensional nature of representation, African dance

analysis must employ an interdisciplinary (historical, sociological, anthropological, cultural and musical) framework using a holistic approach that combines both the practical and conceptual elements of the art form as well as African multi-sensory modalities.



## Appendices:

### Appendix A: The 36 Anlo communities with their dance types and occupations

COMMUNITY	DANCE TYPES	OCCUPATION
1. Anloga-the capital of the state	Agbadza, Atsiagbekor, Adzogbo, Kadodo, Gadzo, Kpedzisu, Husago/Misago, Akpoka, Dunekpoe, Gakpa, Nyayito, Afli, Bamburi, Atsyobor, Gahu, Gota, Atsiafulegede, Viedornor, Senugorme, Kpedzisu, Efa, Yehweh, Ahongbato, Blekete, Atigeli	Shallot Farming, Lagoon Fishing and Marine Fishing
2. Anyanui (Including Atiteti, Fuveme, Agokedzi)	Agbadza, Dunekpoe, Dogbo, Atsiagbekor, Yeweh, Efa, Fofui	Shallot Farming and Marine Fishing
3. Dzita	Agbadza, Atsiagbekor, Adzogbo, Akpoka	Shallot Farming and Marine Fishing
4. Atorkor	Agbadza, Dunekpoe, Akpoka, Efa, Yeweh,	Marine Fishing



	Blekete	
5. Srongboe	Agbadza, Misego, Kpatsa, Efa, Yeweh, Fofui, Kinka	Marine Fishing
6. Whuti	Agbadza, Akpoka, Gakpa, Husago, Misago, Dunekpoe, Nyayito, Atsiafulegede	Marine Fishing and Shallot Farming
7. Woe	Agbadza, Akpoka, Kinka, Yeweh, Efa	Vegetable Farming: Shallot, pepper, tomatoes and okro.
8. Tegbi	Agbadza, Akpoka, Atsiagbekor, Husago, Yeweh, Efa, Dunekpoe, Blekete, Ahongbato, Kinka	Marine Fishing and Vegetable Farming- shallot, tomatoes, pepper and okro
9. Dzelukofe	Agbadza, Atsiagbekor, Adzogbo, Efa, Yeweh, Blekete, Gahu, Kinka, Dunekpoe, Korku, Fofui	Marine Fishing
10. Keta	Agbadza, Gahu, Kinka, Akpoka, Efa, Yeweh	Lagoon Fishing and Marine Fishing

11. Vodza	Agbadza, Gahu, Dunekpoe, Efa, Yeweh, Husago	Lagoon Fishing
12. Kedzi	Agbadza, Akpoka, Atsiagbekor, Dunekpoe, Gahu, Kinka	Lagoon Fishing and Marine Fishing
13. Blekusu	Agbadza, Yeweh, Efa, Fofui, Korku, Blekete	Marine Farming
14. Agavedzi	Agbadza, Efa, Yeweh, Fofui, Husago, Dunekpoe, Kinka	Marine Fishing
15. Adina	Agbadza, Kinka, Agbadza, Nyayito, Gahu, Dunekpoe, Efa, Yeweh	Marine Fishing
16. Adafienu	Agbadza, Adzogbo, Efa, Yeweh, Dunekpoe	Marine Fishing
17. Denu	Agbadza, Gahu, Adzogbo, Kinka, Gota	Marine Fishing
18. Aflao	Agbadza, Adzogbo, Atsiagbekor, Gahu, Gota,	Marine Fishing

	Atsia, Dunekpoe	
19. Agbozume	Agbadza, Atsiagbekor, Adzogbo, Gahu, Kinka, Yeweh, Efa, Fofui, Nyayito, Blekete	Kente weaving and Cassava Farming
20. Klikor	Agbadza, Atsiagbekor, Kpedzisu, Atsiagbekor, Adzogbo, Efa, Yeweh	Cassava and vegetable Farming
21. Afiadenyigba	Agbadza, Gadzo, Atsiagbekor, Adzogbo, Efa, Yeweh, Blekete	Lagoon Fishing and Kente weaving
22. Wheta	Agbadza, Gahu, Gota, Kinka, Dunekpoe, Efa, Yeweh, Efa, Blekete	Lagoon Fishing and Cassava Farming
23. Afife	Agbadza, Gahu, Gota, Dunekpoe, Kinka, Efa, Yeweh	Rice Farming
24. Aborlorve	Agbadza, Gota, Atsiagbekor, Kinka, Dunekpoe	Cassava Farming

25. Anyako	Agtsiagbekor, Adzro, Kinka, Akpoka, Gakpa, Yeweh, Efa, Fofui, Adzogbo, Gota	Lagoon Fishing
26. Sasieme	Agbadza, Gahu, Akpoka, Kinka, Akpalu	Cassava Farming
27. Abor	Agbadza, Kinka, Atsiagbekor, Efa, Yeweh,	Farming and Lagoon Fishing
28. Tsiamé	Agbadza, Adzro, Atsiagbekor, Kinka, Efa, Yeweh	Farming and Fishing
29. Asadame	Agbadza, Kinka, Akpoka, Efa, Yeweh	Farming, lagoon fishing and salt extraction
30. Atiavi	Agbadza, Akpoka, Ahongbato, Gakpa, Yeweh, Efa	Lagoon Fishing
31. Kome	Agbadza, Atsiagbekor, Akpoka, Gahu, Kinka	Fishing and Mat weaving
32. Shime	Agbadza, Kinka, Kpedzisu, Gakpa, Kete, Atsiagbekor, Dunekpoe,	Farming, Fishing and Akpetetsi brewery

	Yeweh	
33. Avenor	Agbadza, Akpoka, Kinka, Yeweh, Efa, Adzro, Efa, Yeweh, Husago	Cassava Farming
34. Penyi	Agbadza, Akpoka, Kinka, Efa, Yeweh	Cassava Farming
35. Dzodze	Agbadza, Kinka, Yeweh, Efa, Husago, Dzigbordi	Farming
36. Ave	Agbadza, Kinka, Yeweh, Efa, Adzro	Farming

**Appendix B: List of schools and institutions that participated in my workshops between 2005 and 2010**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Name and Location of Institution</b>	<b>Workshop Details</b>	<b>The Occasion</b>
2005-2007	Noel Park Primary School, London.	Drumming and Dance	Regular weekly work as part of the curriculum
2005-2007	Totten Hall Infant School, London.	Drumming and Dance	Regular weekly work as part of the curriculum
2005-2007	Colegrave Primary School, London.	Drumming and Dance	Regular weekly work as part of the curriculum
2005-2007	Galliards Primary School, London.	Drumming and Dance	Regular weekly work as part of the curriculum
2005-2007	Wilbury Primary School, London.	Drumming and Dance	Regular weekly work as part of the curriculum
2005-2007	Orion Primary School, London.	Drumming and Dance	Regular weekly work as part of the curriculum
2005-2007	Houndsfield Primary School, London.	Drumming and Dance	Regular weekly work as part of the curriculum
2005-2007	Prince of Wales Junior School, London.	Drumming and Dance	Regular weekly work as part of the curriculum
2005-2007	St. Mary's Catholic Primary School, London.	Drumming and Dance	Regular weekly work as part of the curriculum
2005-2007	St. Francis de Sailes Catholic Junior School, London.	Drumming and Dance	Regular weekly work as part of the curriculum
16/01/2009	Highbury Grove High School, London.	Drumming	World Music Day
27/02/2009	Aston Manor School, Birmingham.	Drumming and story telling	Arts Week Celebration
04/03/2009	Euxton Primerose Hill School, Chorley. Lancashire.	Dance	African Day
12/03/2009	Abberley Street Pupil Referral Unit, Dudley.	Drumming	Enrichment Programme
27/03/2009	St. Aidan's Church of England Technology College, Lancashire.	Dance	Diversity Day

31/03/2009	St. Peter's Primary School,Staffordshire.	Drumming and Dance	African Day
01/04/2009	Oswald Road Primary School, Manchester.	Dance	Diversity Day
03/04/2009	Red Court St. Anslems Primary School, Prenton.	Drumming	World Music Day
21/04/2009	Webster Primary School, Manchester	Drumming	Diversity Day
15/05/2009	Bowring Community Sports College	Dance	African Day
08/06/2009	Archbishop Sentamu Academy, Kingston-upon Hull.	Dance	Multicultural Day
09/06/2009	Pedmore Technology College, Stourbridge.West Midlands.	Drumming	African Day
23/06/2009	Edenhurst Prep. Sch. Staffordshire	Dance	Diversity Day
01/07/2009	The Nelson Thomlinson School, Cumbria.	Dance	Multicultural Day
07/07/2009	Ellesmere Port Catholic High School, Cheshire.	Dance	Summer Festival
14/07/2009	Red Hill High School, Nottingham	Drumming and story telling	World Arts Day
15/07/2009	St. Margaret Church of England High School, Liverpool.	Drumming	African Day
14/10/2009	Holywell Primary School, Leicestershire	Drumming and Singing	Black History Month
15/07/2009	Deeside College, Flintshire	Drumming	Black History Month
16/07/2009	Bloomsbury Children's Centre, Birmingham	Drumming	Black History Month
24/11/2009	New Bridge School, Oldham	Drumming and Dancing	Diversity Day
27/11/2009	Northumberland Park Community School, London.	Drumming	World Music Day
01/12/2009	St. Mihael's Church of England Primary School, Manchester.	Drumming and Dancing	Multicultural Day
13/05/2010	Westroyd Infant School, Leeds	Drumming and Dancing	Diversity Day
03/06/2010	Old Hall Drive Prim Sch. Manchester	Drumming and Dancing	Diversity Day.

## **Appendix C: List of interviews**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Date</b>
1. Nelson Denoo	Accra	4 <sup>th</sup> September, 2011
2. Michael Attipoe	Accra	3 <sup>rd</sup> September, 2011
3. Seth Asare Newman	Accra	24 <sup>th</sup> August, 2011
4. Dartey Kumodzie	Accra	3 <sup>rd</sup> September, 2011
5. James Dunyah	London	28 <sup>th</sup> November, 2012
6. George Fiawoo	London	20 <sup>th</sup> April, 2010
7. George Fiawoo	London	15 <sup>th</sup> November, 2012
8. Godwin Gati	Ho	28 <sup>th</sup> July, 2011
9. Modesto Amegago	Accra	14 <sup>th</sup> August, 2011
10. Samuel Nyamuame	Accra	15 <sup>th</sup> August, 2011
11. Adela Gasu	Anloga	20 <sup>th</sup> August, 2011
12. Adzovi Nukunu	Genui	29 <sup>th</sup> September, 2012
13. Torgbui Sri III	Anloga	1 <sup>st</sup> October, 2012
14. Francis Nii Yartey	Accra	8 <sup>th</sup> September, 2012
15. Prosper Ablordey	Accra	29 <sup>th</sup> August, 2011
16. Torgbui Awusu III	Afife	18 <sup>th</sup> August, 2011
17. Nisio Fiagbedzi	Accra	13 <sup>th</sup> August, 2011
18. Nii Kwei Sowah	Accra	4 <sup>th</sup> March, 2013
19. Kwabena Nketia	Accra	2 <sup>nd</sup> March, 2013
20. Gifty Nukunu	Genui	21 <sup>st</sup> September, 2012
21. Samuel Alorse	Manchester	30 <sup>th</sup> June, 2012



22. Fafali Dziedzoave	Manchester	3 <sup>rd</sup> July, 2012
23. Emmanuel Asiade	Manchester	10 <sup>th</sup> April, 2012
24. Christine Ahiagbede	London	3 <sup>rd</sup> September, 2012
25. Kofi Gbolonyo	Accra	20 <sup>th</sup> August, 2012
26. Kwadzo Gamor	Atiehipe/Anloga	24 <sup>th</sup> August, 2012
27. Xorve Donyah	Whuti/Anloga	26 <sup>th</sup> August, 2012
28. Sam Nutakor	Anloga	27 <sup>th</sup> August, 2012
29. John Gadzekpo	Keta	30 <sup>th</sup> August, 2012
30. Patience Ali	Atiehipe/Anloga	4 <sup>th</sup> September, 2012.

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## Web Links (Online Resources)

Alokli West African Dance: <http://www.alokli.com/index.html>

Anlo-Ewe Culture and History: <http://www.cnmat.berkeley.edu/~ladzekpo/index.html>

Anlo-Ewe Ethnography: <http://www.dancedrummer.com/anlo.html>

Association of Dance of African Diaspora (ADAD) [www.adad.org.uk](http://www.adad.org.uk)

Azaguno: <http://www.azaguno.com/pages/zelma.html>

Badejo Arts: [www.badejoarts.com](http://www.badejoarts.com)

Council of Ewe Associations of North America: <http://www.ceanaonline.org>

Dancedrummer.com: <http://www.dancedrummer.com>

Dzodze: <http://www.dzodze.com>

Noviha UK: [www.noviha.org](http://www.noviha.org)

The African Guide: <http://www.africaguide.com/culture>

The Anlo-Ewe Music of West Africa: <http://music.calarts.edu/~aladzekp/alfred.html>

The Ewe Culture: Bridging Cultures: <http://www.bridgingdevelopment.org/culture.html>

Venavi Drums Limited: [www.venavidrums.com](http://www.venavidrums.com)

Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ewe\\_music](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ewe_music)

Zadonu: <http://www.zadonu.com>



### **Filmography (Audio Cassettes, DVDs, Video Tapes and other Audiovisual Materials)**

African Traditions (2000) Traditional Songs and Dances from Africa performed by Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble. Audio CD.

Coming Home (1988) African Dance Performance by Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble. DVD (NRCD).

Culture and Education: Live Ghanaian Television Breakfast Show (2010) DVD by Ghana National Television, Accra.

Dance a Symbol of Ghana: Ghanaian music and dance performances at National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFAC, 2004). Recorded and produced by Ghana Television, Accra. 2004. Video Cassette.

Ewe Drumming From Ghana: The Soup Which Is Sweet Draws the Chairs in Closer (2005) Recorded by James Burns. Published by Topic Records under World and Traditional Section of the British Library Sound Archive. CD

Ewe Notsie Migration (2005) Hogbetsotso. Recorded by C.K. Kudjorjijie ("Papavi Hogbedeto"). Ho, Ghana: Rizo Linos Records, 2005. Audio Cassette.

Female Voices from an Ewe Dance-drumming Community in Ghana: Our Music Has Become a Divine Spirit (2009) Anlo-Ewe Music and Dance Performances by James Burns. London: Ashgate. 2009. DVD.

Noviha Hogbetsotso Cultural Festival. Anlo-Ewe music and dance performances. Recorded and produced by Noviha UK, 2009. DVD.

Thand Abantwaa: African Music and Dance performed by Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble  
(1996). Audio CD produced by Adzido.

Under African Skies: African Music and Dance Performance of Adzido (1994). Audio CD  
Produced by Adzido.